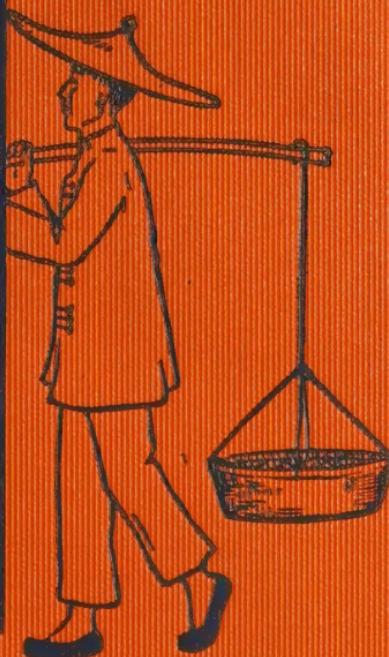
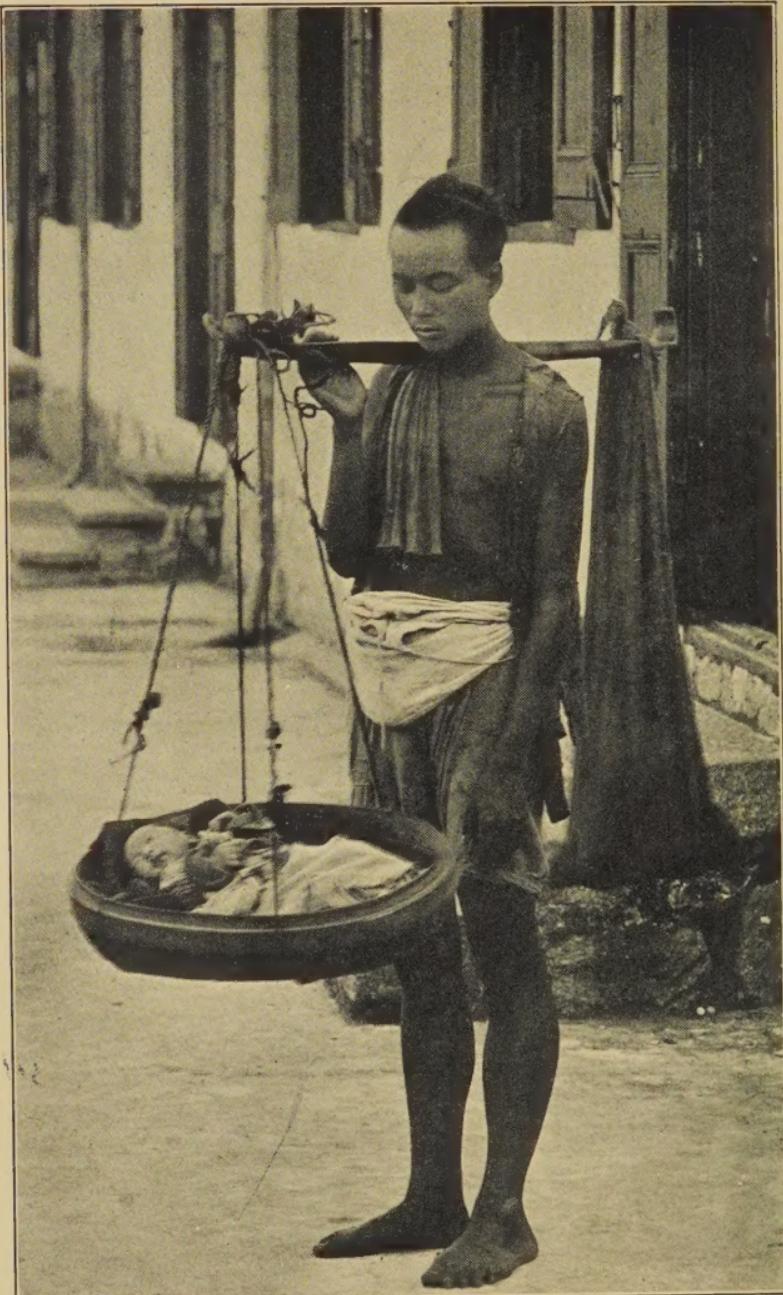


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A PRECIOUS BALANCE

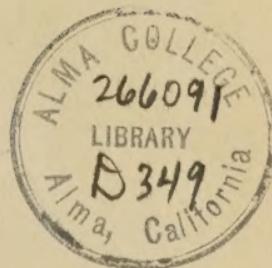
“The baby in the photograph had been bought the day their letter reached Ning-po.” (Page 222)

BLUEGOWNS

A GOLDEN TREASURY OF
TALES OF THE CHINA MISSIONS

BY
ALICE DEASE

Author of *The Debt of Guy Arnolle*,
The Hollow of the Mass, etc., etc.



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FOREWORD

A “GOLDEN TREASURY” indeed is this collection of mission stories by Alice Dease. The best traits of the Chinese people — solid, enduring traits, that underlie the sometimes more apparent superficial defects — are portrayed with sympathy and knowledge. Mission life is presented in glimpses that make a vivid and inspiring picture. The tales will appeal to the young of heart of all ages, but some that are more distinctly juvenile in character are grouped at the end of the volume.

The title, “BLUEGOWNS”, is reminiscent of the garments worn very commonly in China.

Many of these stories were first published by the Catholic Truth Society of London, in a collection called *Chinese Lanterns*, now out of print. Other stories appeared from time to time in various magazines; while some are printed for the first time in the present volume. All are true incidents and are based on facts told to the author by missionary priests or sisters actually in the field. Grateful acknowledgment is made to the Catholic Truth Society and to the several magazine editors, for permission to reprint the stories in this form.

— THE EDITORS.

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THE BOY

A VERY small Chinese boy struggling under a very large Chinese water-carrier attracted Father Pierre's attention as he stood trying to take shelter from a terrific shower in a doorway in Toking.

"Have you far to go?" he asked the child, as he too stopped in the doorway.

"I am at home," replied the boy; "but I will trouble you to open the gate, which is closed to me, since my hands are incommoded by this water-jar."

"You are in a great hurry," said the priest as he turned, smiling, to do as the boy asked.

"My father is waiting for me," replied the child. "A baby has come to this house and the water is needed to drown it in."

Father Pierre had been too long in China for these words to shock him as they would have done some twenty years before. He was sadly accustomed to hear of such things, but he could not let a little soul slip out of the world into which God had sent it without making some effort to save it.

"The rain comes down with great force," he said. "Will your respected father allow me the shelter of his roof until this storm is over?"

"That should be welcome to you," replied the child with quaint politeness, and he led the stranger across the court into a room where a man and several children were gathered together.

What he had said was perfectly true. The father was waiting for the water in which to drown his new-born child. Curiously enough, it was a son, though usually in China it is the daughters who are considered superfluous. In this case the pro-

tions were a joy to behold. Colored sawdust in his hands produced the most wonderful patterns on the tablecloth for every-day meals, and on special occasions a regular garden of pressed flowers surrounded each dish. In the real garden outside, his ingenuity was always displaying itself in surprises for the master, and the lessons in carpentry at the convent at Ningpo stood him in good stead in his new home.

The riots had not broken out at that time, but the feeling against foreigners and Christians was creeping towards an outburst, and Mr. Nugent found one tenet of religion very difficult to uphold. It is hard to love one's neighbor as one's self when that neighbor takes the form of a crowd of hooting, jeering Chinese boys, reveling in the superiority of their own pagandom over the powerlessness of a mere Christian. The only thing to be done was to impress upon the Boy that for all Christians, Chinese or foreign, he must be ready to lay down his life as willingly as he would do it for the master himself; and as far as the pagans were concerned, he was taught to leave them alone, to shun them when possible, certainly never to retaliate upon them.

The early summer brought an unwelcome change to the Boy and his master. Mr. Nugent was transferred to a post some hundred miles in the interior, and was obliged to bid good-bye to all his friends, and to go to a place where there were only half-a-dozen European inhabitants, no church, no newspapers, and where mail came irregularly once a week. To the Boy the change was also distasteful. Second only to the master in his affections was the priest whom he had to leave; and, besides this, on arriving at their new home, he discovered that they were to live with two Englishmen, of whom he was sadly, painfully jealous. He was quick enough to see that these strangers did not trust him, and that they thought the master was foolish for doing so. Before long, however, he became more reconciled to this new arrangement, for, going about as



THE BOY

“The little face that brightened at his coming and grew doleful when he went away.” (Page 3)

he did amongst the people, he learnt that things were being talked about which, if carried out, would make it unsafe for one foreigner to live alone.

When the intense heat of early summer became unbearable in the city, Mr. Nugent and his companions moved across the river to a house that stood high up over the waters, with trees to shelter it, and above all, with a palisade that made it a place possible of defence in case of danger. Here three Americans joined the little party of Englishmen, and before long two missionaries belonging to the China Inland Mission were persuaded to come out also, ostensibly for the sake of coolness, but in reality so that the whole little white colony might be together in case of an outbreak.

And for this they had not long to wait. Very quietly a supply of provisions had been got together, enough to last eight men for nearly a month. There was a well in the garden to provide water, and arms and ammunition were not wanting.

“Eight of us—and the Boy,” Mr. Nugent had said, when making preparations for a siege; but the other men had laughed at him, saying that at the first menace of danger the Boy would fly with the rest of the household and seek for safety with his own people. But Mr. Nugent knew the Boy, and trusted him, and a ninth mouth was counted for in the supplies.

They were all together when at last the rioters came: a howling, hooting mob, who surrounded the house and tried to batter down the doors of the palisades. A few rifle shots produced a moment of silence, in which Mr. Macfarlane demanded from the leaders outside that they should retire from one gate, so that the Chinese servants should be allowed to pass out if they wished. One after another, the household availed themselves of this permission. There was no time to be lost. The gate was opened. Hastily all passed through, and as they did so the noise outside began again.

An hour later, calling for the Boy, Mr. Nugent found that

he, too, was gone. He, the boy he had trusted, whom he owned to himself he had loved, — the Boy had deserted him. It was a bitter moment; and so deeply did he feel it, that his comrades, who before had mocked, were silent now.

The fury of a Chinese mob sometimes goes down as quickly as it rises. In this, and in the fact that the closing of the company's firm threw several hundreds of workmen out of employment, lay the hopes of the besieged. Had they but known it, the latter hope at least was void; for before leaving the city the mob had sacked and destroyed the whole building, so that, even if the overseers had been at liberty, work would have been impossible.

The days dragged on wearily and with a growing feeling of hopelessness. The Chinese were kept at bay by the rifles; but their patience seemed endless, and they evidently meant to wait and watch to the end. The provisions were decreasing, and with them went the hope and spirits of the besieged. Only a week more could they hold out; only a few days — and then death.

They had counted so confidently on help from the outer world, but they did not know that the steamers were stopped up the river, and that as yet their principals at Shanghai knew nothing of their straits. Three of their number were wounded, one was down with sunstroke. It was almost a question of hours now until that roaring sea of yellow humanity would gain the point they had waited for so long. And inside the palisade the Englishmen prepared themselves for the end.

Afterwards not one amongst them could tell how it happened. They were half dazed, more than half starved, only suddenly they became aware of an unwonted stir outside. They thought it was some fancy of their strained senses when a British cheer fell on their ears. But eight men could not be so mistaken. Then came the crack of rifles and hope was suddenly reborn. Their own last rounds of ammunition answered, and

the Chinese at the gate fell back. It was getting dark, and though they knew now that a rescue party had come, nor friend nor foe could tell the number of it. Then with groans in place of victorious cries, the Boxers moved towards the city, and the besieged men's friends came to the gate. For the first time since their Chinese servants had gone out it was opened. There were familiar faces now, where threatening yellow ones had been so long: men from the city which Malachi Nugent had left with regret some months before, and backing them a little army of Christian Chinese.

How had they learned of their friends' need?

The answer was not far to seek. Worn to skin and bone from hardships and from fever, with parched lips and little feet all swollen and blistered from traveling, the Boy lay in the arms of the rescuing party's leader.

"He would come back with us, Nugent," said the newcomer as greeting; and at the familiar and beloved name, the black, fever-bright eyes glistened.

"It—it was muchee far, master," said the Boy weakly, looking up into his face. But Nugent, with his head bowed over the little body that he had taken from the other and now was carrying tenderly into the house, answered never a word.

THE SACRAMENTS AT MO-PO-KO

FOR five days the mission boat had been coming slowly up the river. Father Etienne had never before been so far inland; indeed, no priest had ever been to Mo-po-ko, but two young men from the village, sons of an important personage there, had been sent down stream to study, and coming in contact with some Christian natives, they had eventually found a priest and had embraced Catholicism.

This visit of Father Etienne's was a long-promised one, and when his boat neared the village, Hon and Chu, the Christian students, were waiting for him on the river's bank. Their joy at seeing their "Father in God" again was very touching and expressed itself in flowery sentences of welcome. With them was another young man, tall and well set up, with a certain air of authority about him. His face was unfamiliar to Father Etienne, yet he greeted him with as much pleasure as did the others, kissing his hand with every mark of respect.

"This youth," said Chu, by way of introduction, "is the son of our chief man. He is not in the darkness. No, like ourselves, he is in the light, and he will show you the spirit of truth that is in this place."

The three young men led the priest to a house a little distance up the river. It was thatched, like all the other dwellings, with grasses, and from it all furniture had been removed on the approach of the mission boat. Here Gnu left the others, going in search of food and lodging for the boatman; whilst Hon and Chu asked eager questions about the Catholics Father Etienne had left behind him, and the Sisters and students they

had known. But Gnu was not long absent. Soon there were sounds of approaching footsteps, and the young man appeared, hunting a dozen or more children before him and followed by so large a crowd that the building was quickly filled, and people still kept gathering round the doorway.

“Father,” said Gnu, “you can question these young ones, for they know their catechism a little; but do not heed those others,” indicating the rest of the crowd with a wave of his hand; “do not waste your time on them; they are as yet no better than a pack of owls.”

Father Etienne questioned the boys as Gnu desired, and he found that they answered better than many who attended the Sisters’ classes at the mission.

“They can pray, too,” said Gnu, anxious that no part of their training should be overlooked. At a word from him the boys began to recite their prayers in the high singsong fashion so dear to the Chinese. “And they can sing,” Gnu continued, determined that Father Etienne should hear their whole repertoire. The priest intoned a hymn, in which all immediately joined, with more regard to volume than to melody.

“You see, Father,” said Gnu, when the examination had been concluded, “they are all ready to be baptized. If you had not come, Hon would have done it; but now that you are here it is much better.”

One thing surprised the priest, and that was that no one in the village seemed to hold the official post of catechist. Gnu was evidently the leading spirit in this colony of catechumens, but Father Etienne knew nothing about him. Before proceeding further he thought it wise to learn something of this self-taught teacher.

“Your name is Gnu, I believe?” he said.

“It is,” replied the young man, “and the name of my district is Mo-po-ko.”

"Have you been baptized?" asked the priest.

"Of course, Missioner," was the somewhat reproachful answer.

"At the mission?"

"No, Missioner."

"By a traveling missioner?"

"No, Missioner. You are the first priest I have ever seen in my life."

"Then how have you received Baptism?"

"Hon baptized me, Missioner; but not until he had prepared me for the sacrament."

"Hon baptized you, and prepared you too! This sounds most interesting. Tell me how it all was."

With a commanding gesture the young man dismissed the children and bade the people disperse. Then drawing forward a seat, nothing loath to speak, he began:

"When Hon and Chu came up the river from where they had been studying for a long time, I asked them what they had learned. First they showed me how by drawing certain lines on paper, or on sand, or in fact on any smooth surface, they could write down the words any one spoke and could read them again in ten or twenty years, or could give them to other people to read. Hon tried to teach me to do it, but it was far too difficult for me to learn. Then he told me how to count with lines instead of with my fingers, but, gracious me! that took so long to do that I soon left that alone, also.

"At last he began to tell me about the mission, and he showed me a book that you had given him. He called it a catechism, and of course I understood it as soon as he read it to me, and every day I said a little of it over and over, until at last I remembered it quite well. It was very beautiful, what I learnt from that book, and it explained many things that I had often wondered about before. When we came to the end of the book Hon said he had nothing more to teach me.



A WIDELY KNOWN CATHOLIC CHINESE LAYMAN
Lo Pa Hong — knighted by Rome — with members of his family at Shanghai

“‘But,’ said I, ‘if we are to follow the instructions in this book, I, too, must receive the sacraments. First there is Baptism.’

“‘Oh, as to Baptism,’ said Hon, ‘I could do that.’

“‘Well, then baptize me,’ said I.

“So he did it in here, with all the inhabitants of the village gathered round. We decorated the house with wreaths of flowers; then I went outside and had my head newly shaved, and when the time came for the ceremony to be performed Hon put on a clean white robe over his other clothes. It was all beautiful, and I had never been so happy before. But there was one great difficulty. I had two wives, one little one and one big one, and the question was, what was I to do? I decided to send one of them away in the presence of the whole village. It was the little one that had to go, though she had been very expensive, and I kept the big one. I will show her to you later on. At present she is cooking the dinner.

“Hon baptized me, and then he said, ‘Now you are a Christian, and as long as you live you will never be anything else.’ Then he took a scapular out of a box you had given him, where he had kept it with great care, and, putting it round my neck, he said, ‘You must wear this as a mark, so that the Blessed Virgin may always know your body on earth and that she may come and guide your soul when she wishes it to go to heaven.’ Then he gave me a rosary, and said, ‘This is to help you to pray. You must say it every day, beginning at the beginning and finishing at the end.’”

Gnu paused, hesitated, and stopped speaking. Evidently he was not sure if the rest of his story was likely to meet with Father Etienne’s unqualified approval.

“Tell me the rest,” said the priest. “Tell me everything. All that I have heard has interested me very much.”

“After that,” explained Gnu, “Hon did not quite know what to do. It says in the catechism that any one may baptize

in case of necessity, but my wife was the difficulty, for it says nothing like that about Matrimony.

“‘ You must do something,’ I said to Hon. ‘ She has been a good wife, and I can’t drown her or leave her to starve.’

“‘ No, that cannot be necessary,’ replied Hon. ‘ but you see I don’t know how the Fathers give the sacrament of Matrimony.’

“‘ You must do the best you can,’ I said.

“‘ Very well,’ he replied, ‘ I can think of nothing better than this, Gnu. I marry you to this woman for ever, but only to her, and to no one else, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.’

“‘ Unfortunately,’ said Hon, when that was done, ‘ this is not yet all. Until you are confirmed you will never be a strong and perfect Christian, but Confirmation is even more difficult than Matrimony, because a bishop has to give it.’

“‘ It is a case of necessity,’ I said decidedly. ‘ I must have all, so you must try to do it.’

“ So Hon took some clean palm oil and said a prayer over it, then he dipped his fingers in it and wrote a cross upon my forehead, saying, ‘ I confirm you by this mark. Be a firm Christian. From henceforward you will be made to suffer many things by the pagans who are here today and by others from other villages. They will do all they can to tease and annoy you. Well, you must bear it all as you bear this,’ and he gave me a cuff in the face that made my eyes water. But all the same I understood what he meant.

“ After that I said to him, ‘ It seems to me, Hon, that this is not all?’

“‘ Certainly not,’ he replied. ‘ There are still Penance, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, and Holy Orders, but it is no use your asking for these, for never, never could I give them, except, indeed, perhaps Penance, but for that you must first have time to commit some sin.’

“And now, Missioner,” concluded Gnu simply, “you know all about my becoming a Christian. I am very glad that you have come, because I want to have the rest of the sacraments, and I am sure you will not refuse to give them to me.”

There was such a curious mixture of ignorance and of true piety in all that he had heard that Father Etienne could scarcely restrain his amusement, and yet he was deeply touched at the attempts of the Christian lads to help their heathen friend to find the light.

“As to the sacraments,” he said to Gnu, “Hon was quite right in baptizing you, if, after learning the catechism, you wished for Baptism, but I think we had better start now with the Sacrament of Penance.”

“Alas, Missioner,” replied Gnu, “that cannot be, for since my baptism I have committed no sin. God has not allowed it.”

The simplicity, the trusting faith, went straight to Father Etienne’s heart, and Christ’s own words came back to him, as he laid his hand in blessing on the young man’s head: “Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

“THOU HAST BEEN FAITHFUL”

THE sun was beating down pitilessly, and, although the streets were shady from their very narrowness, Neng-ku the basket-maker was glad to reach his destination. He was not kept waiting long outside the great wooden gate that broke the monotony of the high brick wall, but was quickly admitted through a pleasant courtyard, lined with carefully trained plants and dwarf shrubs, to the large audience-hall.

Even if the beautifully embroidered silken hangings had not shown at a glance that the house belonged to a wealthy man, the great scroll on the wall above the carved divan set forth the importance of the master of the house, as proved by his family pedigree.

Neng-ku's errand was with the ladies of the establishment. A message had come to his employer asking that the best workman should be sent at once to the merchant's house to carry out an important order. It was lucky for Neng-ku that he was the best worker in his master's employment, otherwise he would have found it difficult to keep his place.

Not many months before this he had become a Christian, and when he refused to work on Sundays he was at first threatened with dismissal; but then, remembering how useful he was, his master contented himself with reducing his pay and allowing him no food on the days that he did not work. Neng had gladly suffered these things for the sake of his Faith, but now a further trial awaited him.

To the little ladies of the merchant's household the advent of even a basket-maker was an event of interest, and before long one of the curtains at the end of the hall was raised and five little hobbling figures appeared. They were clad in silken

garments of gay color, and each one carried a stock to help her to walk, for their feet had been so tightly bandaged in their childhood that they were now too small to support their bodies.

"You are the basket-maker?" asked one. "Then see, we have brought you the models of what we wish to have made."

A servant carried forward half a dozen small intricately-made baskets, and laid them before Neng. They were very delicately fashioned, and the copying of them could be entrusted to only a veritable artist in basket-work; but Neng showed no pleasure at having been selected to do such a commission.

"They are incense-holders," he said slowly, after examining one amongst them. "I am sorry, lady, but I cannot do your work for you."

"You cannot do the work?" repeated one of the ladies incredulously. "But did not our messenger ask for the best worker in your master's shop?"

For a moment Neng was tempted to give no explanation of his conduct. If he allowed the ladies and his master to think that he was not skillful enough to do such elaborate work he might escape without further blame; but if he told the truth, he knew that he ran great danger of being dismissed without any prospect of getting work elsewhere. He hesitated, but only for a moment. "Lady," he said simply, "it is not that the work is too difficult for me, but I am a Christian and I cannot make anything for the service of idols: therefore I cannot make the holders of incense to burn before them."

The ladies, shut in within the four walls of their home, knew nothing about Christians, but they could not believe that any poor man would refuse, for the sake of his religion, to earn money and they asked Neng, curiously, to explain what he meant. It was not an easy task for a man, uneducated, unused to putting his thoughts about religion into words, to tell of the wonderful gift of faith that God had bestowed upon him;

and the ladies, too ignorant to understand the deep feeling hidden under his halting speech, soon tired of listening to him, and one by one wandered off into the sunny garden.

Sadly Neng turned to leave the hall, but as he did so a voice called to him to stop. A washerman carrying a pile of snowy linen had come in unperceived, and, although the ladies to whom the basket-maker's words were addressed had neither heeded nor understood them, they had carried the message of the Truth to this unseen listener.

"Tell me," he said earnestly, "do you really mean all that you were saying just now?"

"Mean it!" Neng gave a short, harsh laugh. "Does a man give up his daily bread for a thing that he does not mean?"

"Then it is true that there is a supreme God who made the world and who is our Father?"

"Every word that I spoke is true," replied Neng. "But who am I to tell of such high things? Come with me to the foreign Father in God, and, hearing his words with a humble heart, you will believe."

Together they passed out of the richly decorated hall into the hot, evil-smelling street; but the sights and sounds and smells around them were too familiar to distract their attention from the engrossing subject that occupied their minds. Half an hour ago they had been strangers, unaware even of each other's existence, but before they parted they were bound together by a bond, unseen, it is true, yet firm and lasting.

That night the two men met again. When Neng, after a stormy interview with his employer, ending in dismissal, reached the poor, small dwelling of the only Catholic priest in that great city, his new friend Wang was already waiting for him. Chance-heard, the Truth had come direct to the washerman's soul. The gift of faith had been offered to him, and he had accepted it with the unquestioning belief of a little child.

He took his place as the lowest in the catechist's class, but soon he had outstripped his companions, and when the shortest time allowable to catechumens in China had elapsed, he was baptized. Then, as to Neng-ku so to Wang, came a time of trial.

On learning that he had become a Christian his master immediately dismissed him, and no one along the river, where all the washing was done, would employ him. In his need he turned to the priest; but he, struggling to keep himself and the many helpless ones of his mission on the small income allowed him by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, could only advise poor Wang, whose family had closed their doors upon him, to go away, to where bigotry was less strong than it was in the city. So Wang went out into the world, truly leaving father and mother and brother and sister for Christ's sake.

As a boy he had worked on the river boats, and now, being unable to get employment in his own trade, he took again to a sailor's life, and so he traveled here and there through the length and breadth of Chinese provinces as large as, or larger than, the whole of the British Isles put together.

At each large town that he came to in his journeyings, his first inquiries were as to the presence of Catholic missionaries, but it was very seldom that he found a mission established, even in the large towns. In many places, however, there were native catechists who taught those whom the grace of God had touched, and prepared them to be baptized when the priest should come around on his yearly or half-yearly visitation. Only twice during his wanderings was Wang able to receive the sacraments; but when the anniversary of the day of his baptism came, he found his way back to his old home, back to the priest whom he called his “first Father in God”.

“Father,” he said, “for a year I have traveled through my poor country, and every day have I asked myself the same questions; and the first of these questions is, ‘Why, when the

sons of the West have the love of God in their hearts, do they keep the knowledge of Him from the sons of the East? ” ”

This was no new question to the missioner, and he answered sadly:

“ We do our best, Wang, we who know of the needs of our Eastern brothers; but there are so many to whom these needs are unknown. Even so, more sons of the West would gladly bring the light that is so needed if means could be found for their support. Missioners are men and women, who suffer hunger and cold as others do; and it was Christ Himself who said that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel.” ”

“ Ah! ” Wang nodded his head thoughtfully. “ Then it is not only in the hands of priests and nuns that lies the saving of our souls. God can ask every man, who has a ‘ cash ’ to spare after his own needs are supplied, why he did not help to send the light into darkness? Father in God, I had two more questions, but with one answer you have answered them to me. The first was this, ‘ Do I who see light owe no duty to my brothers who are in darkness? ’ and the second, ‘ How then can I do this duty? ’ I am an ignorant man, I cannot teach; I am poor, I cannot give. Father in God, you have given me food for thought.” ”

And with the customary farewells he passed out of the little bare room.

It was his godfather, Neng-ku, whom next he sought, but he too had become an outcast from his home, and Wang had to have recourse again to the priest before he could find him.

Things had gone so badly with Neng that he sometimes wondered if any man could remain in the paths of truth when so much came to force him back to paganism. The coming now of Wang to him was almost as providential as that of Neng had been to the former a year ago. The questions that had troubled Wang had found their place too in the burden of Neng, and he entered eagerly into a discussion about them.

A TYPICAL GROUP OF LAY ASSISTANTS IN A CHINESE MISSION



Wang's gratitude to God for the gift of faith was so deep that it rekindled the zeal which continued opposition had succeeded in dampening in his godfather's heart, and together they talked and planned for the future.

Their home ties were severed. Their usefulness in their own country was curtailed, since neither of them could obtain lasting and regular work at their respective trades; and Wang from the strength of his zeal, Neng from his very weakness, wished to live within reach of a priest and his ministrations. Thinking over all this, they came to a grave decision: for Christ's sake they determined to become exiles from their native land, and to seek overseas the fortune that was denied them at home.

It was not until long after this that I heard of the existence of these two Chinese, and learned the story of their lives and the reason of their self-imposed exile. It was a friend in Liverpool who told me of them. They appeared one day, two shaven-headed, blue-gowned figures, in the church, and very quietly they became part of the habitual congregation. Then their fame as washermen began to be spoken of, for in a room that one Englishman could hardly have lived in alone, these two had set up a laundry, and week after week they turned out work that half a dozen employees in a steam laundry would have failed to get through. And their personal expenditure? A little rice, odds and ends that we should have thrown away as useless, and now and again, at distant intervals, a new blue gown.

The neighbors who saw the work the Chinese accomplished, and knew the economy of their housekeeping, wondered where all the money that they earned was stored, and they thought that one day Wang and Neng would disappear as quietly as they had appeared, having made fortunes large enough to enable them to end their days in peace in their own

country. But we, who before this had learnt the story of their past, knew something also of their present.

They had not come to Europe to earn for themselves; they had come to lay by money for a very different purpose. They, especially Wang, had seen for themselves, the need of more missionaries in China, their motherland in spite of all; and they were determined that at their doors the reproach should not lie that they to whom light was given did nothing to shed its rays into the darkness of their own heathen country. As soon as their laundry was firmly established and their earnings were more than their everyday needs, they began to put their spare pence by. In time the little hoard turned to silver. Later on gold was added to their store, and then, with patient persistence, they found out the name of a college where students are taken for the foreign missions, and they questioned the Superior as to the possibility of finding a student who would be willing, when ordained, to go on the missions in China.

Such a one was found, — an earnest, zealous youth, who thanked God for his good fortune in being received free at college and so enabled to carry out his heart's desire; but he never knew till long afterwards who his benefactors were. It was only when, on the eve of his departure for his mission, the Superior told him to look out for two Chinese who would come to bid him God-speed on the steamer which would bear him away to the East from Liverpool, that he learned their secret. And this farewell was the only visible reward that Wang and Neng allowed themselves for that portion of their lives' work.

Their next venture was not crowned with the same success. The student chosen did not finish his course, and so the toil of some years seemed wasted. Then whilst a third was still at college, Neng, after a short illness, died in a Liverpool hospital, and Wang was left alone. For some months he toiled on at his work, trying to do by himself what it had taken the time and hands of two to accomplish; but although he managed to

pay to the last penny at the college, he felt he could not continue his business unaided.

The Superior of the missionary college, had, through long correspondence, become his friend, and he it was who suggested to Wang to do what he had long wished — to return to his native country. The second young priest, now ready to start on his long journey, knew no word of Chinese, and Wang soothed his conscience as to giving up his self-imposed task by undertaking during the voyage to give the new missioner lessons in the language.

Wang had made a few friends in Liverpool, and from one of the priests there we hear occasionally of him. He did not take up his old trade when he got back to China. The young priest's progress in Chinese was not enough to allow him to do without an interpreter, and in this capacity Wang remained with him. He is interpreter and general helper, catechist and sacristan; and his busy days, filled with work for others, are bringing him nearer and nearer to the time when, we can have little doubt, his Master will say to him, “Thou hast been faithful.”

TWO QUESTIONS—AND A THIRD

THE world seemed very dreary to Dzing on the first evening that he spent in the town of Yun-yang. He was alone in the world, for only a few weeks ago he had buried his old wife, far off in the country, and had come to the city, hoping in the busy life there to forget his sorrow and at the same time to find the answer to a question that had long been troubling him. But once in the busy streets he felt even more lonely than he had done in his empty house at Ong-zih, and his impulse was to get away from the crowd and noise and bustle. To do this, he turned down a side street, seeking again the solitude that he had come to Yun-yang to escape.

In the city this was not easy to find, for even in the side streets people were continually coming and going, and the old man's curiosity was aroused on seeing people passing in twos and threes through a doorway that stood open, it alone breaking the blank wall of the street. A Chinese stood at the entrance, and seeing Dzing's inquiring looks, he spoke to him.

"Do you wish to come in?" he asked; "all are welcome here, and there is nothing to pay."

"What have you inside?" asked Dzing, his curiosity aroused. "Not much, I expect; it is nothing for nothing in the city, I find."

"Not much!" repeated the gatekeeper. "It may not seem much to you, yet it is the only thing in the world that is really of any value."

"What do you mean? You are trying to make a fool of me," said the old countryman irritably.

"No, indeed I am not," said the gatekeeper. "Why don't

you go in and see for yourself? You look as if you had not much to do."

And so Dzing went into the mission hall. It was nearly full of men and boys, and at one end there was a raised platform on which stood a man clad almost the same as the others, yet who had a different air about him. When he spoke this difference was increased. He spoke Chinese, but with an accent that Dzing had never before heard, and still more unfamiliar to him was the subject on which the stranger spoke.

Yet it was nothing new. The story that the priest—for such he was—had to tell was as old as the world itself. He spoke of God as the Father of all mankind, as the Father who is loving and merciful and forgiving. The words sank deep into Dzing's lonely heart, and he remained in his place long after the discourse had ended, watching the speaker as he moved from his place and walked down amongst those who had been listening to him, greeting those he knew and answering the questions that strangers put to him.

Out in the country Dzing had never heard of Christian missionaries, yet at this, his very first meeting with one, he did not doubt that what had been said was the truth. He accepted it with childlike faith, for he saw a prospect of at last finding an answer to the question that had been troubling him for so long. That night he did not venture to do more than listen, but on the following evening he made his way a second time to the quiet little street where such wonderful things were to be learned.

It was only a course of sermons, the gate-keeper told him, not a service that was regularly held. The priest who spoke had many hundreds of miles to travel, and he could stay only a short time in each of the towns in his vast district. Hearing this, Dzing resolved not to allow what might be his only chance of gaining the knowledge he desired to pass unimproved, and when

the sermon was over he purposely put himself in the missioner's way.

"What is your honorable name?" inquired the priest, by way of beginning the conversation that it was evident the stranger desired.

"My name is Dzing," was the answer, "but I am troubled by a question, and you, who have spoken so much that is true and beautiful, are perhaps the man who is destined to answer me." He lowered his voice and spoke very earnestly. "You speak of a happy life after death and of a God-Man who loves us, but how can I go before a God with the stains of a lifetime upon me? I am an old man, and what am I to do with my sins?"

The missioner was often asked more difficult questions than this.

"That is one of the things that God has sent us here to China to teach," he said; but Dzing interrupted him, fearing he had not fully explained himself.

"Our scholars say there is no life after death," he went on. "They say that when we die the seven things which compose our souls are scattered, but I have never been able to believe that it is really so."

"Indeed it is not so," quickly replied the priest. "Our souls are made for life after the death of our bodies. When we die they are judged—"

"I knew it! I felt it!" cried Dzing. "I think and think about it, but I do not know what I can do with my sins. I have prayed to all the gods and have offered candles and incense before them. Some people say I must fast from meat, and others say this is no use. We used to talk of this together, my old wife and I, and since she is gone I lie awake at night and think, and in the daytime I think and think again, and still no answer comes, and I say as I said before, 'What am I to do with my sins?'"

The missioner, in simple words that best conveyed his meaning, explained to Dzing how Christ had died so as to wash away our repented sins in His precious Blood; how, before dying, He had said to His Apostles, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven"; how he, the speaker, had received at his ordination this same power.

Dzing listened to the priest's words with mingled feelings. He was bewildered, aghast, at finding that the idolatry he had clung to for seventy years was a mere human rite, worthless as praise to the Supreme Being whose existence he had always felt. Then, too, the goodness of God overcame him, and he begged to be told how he could repay such mercy and such grace. The mercy shown in the forgiveness of past sin was in his eyes to be equaled only by the grace given in the Sacrament of Penance, which helps the penitent to resist sin for the future. He had found the answer to his question, but the answer had brought still another question with it: If God has done this for us, what must we do to repay Him?

The priest talked long and earnestly with Dzing, then told him to come again and learn more of the truths of Christianity and the teachings of the Church which should in the future be his guide. Dzing did not need a second invitation; but the mission at Yung-yang was nearly over. Two days after the above conversation, the missioner was obliged to go on his way, leaving his flock and those who sought to enter into it to help each other: those who knew, to instruct the ignorant; and all to pray. For seventy years Dzing had sought the truth, and now that he had found it, he wished to learn all he could concerning it from whosoever could teach him. The appointed native catechumen answered all the questions he was able, and gave the old man books to help him in his studies, and for many months Dzing labored after knowledge and prayed for the fullness of faith. When the missioner returned, Dzing was

amongst the first to ask for Baptism and to be admitted to the fold of the Good Shepherd.

For some time after his baptism, Dzing remained in the city. Then one day he told his friends that he was going home to Ong-zih, his native village, which he had thought never to see again. At first he was missed from the place in the prayer-room that by long occupancy had become his; but in time he was seldom thought of, then gradually forgotten.

The months rolled into years, and the Boxer rising, simmering for so long, at last broke out, carrying death to between fifteen and twenty thousand Christians before its force was expended. Catholic churches and convents were razed to the ground; schools and orphanages were burnt; Christian villages were pillaged and their inhabitants killed or scattered. Homeless and helpless, many fugitives sought refuge with the Sisters in the various towns; but they, with their convents ruined, their workrooms destroyed, could do but little to alleviate the misery around them.

One evening, in a town many miles down the river from Yung-yang, the Sisters were gathered together in the garden of a house which had been lent them until their own convent could be rebuilt. They were recounting to each other the contrivances to which they had been obliged to have recourse during the day to fit in one more baby in the *crèche*, one more child in the orphanage, one more old man in the home, when a message came to the Sister Superior, saying that yet another visitor was asking urgently to see her.

“Yet another visitor,” the Sister had said; but answering the summons, it seemed to “Ma Sœur” as though a crowd innumerable awaited her. There was an old man who seemed to be the leader of the band, eight or ten little boys, mere babies some of them, and in the background two more men, both well over seventy, who carried between them a third, bent double and quite helpless.



DZING

“He was alone in the world . . . and had come to the city.”
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“We have come,” said the first old man, when the preliminary politeness had been gone through, “we have come to you because we are helpless and poor, and we heard far, far away at Ong-zih that to the poor and the helpless you are as the Spirit of God on earth.”

They had indeed come from Ong-zih, and the speaker was none other than Dzing, the Christian of Yun-yang. He told his story, the first part as we know it.

In going home to Ong-zih his idea had been that, being there a person of some consequence, he would have more influence in spreading the truth than in a place where he was a stranger. Amongst the younger people his words had little effect, but some of the old friends, with whom he had often, in bygone days, discussed the question of what he could do with his sins, were interested. They listened, and by degrees grace touched their hearts.

Like Dzing, each of these old men had something to live upon, their needs were few, and as they learnt more of Christianity they determined to try to teach the children of the poorest people in the village, hoping thereby to spread the truth among the rising generation. A bad season helped these old apostles to start their work. Parents made no demur at allowing their boys to go for learning where they got a meal of rice and perhaps a bowl of rice-water and vegetables as well. Some, indeed, were glad to be rid of their children altogether, and thus by degrees a little orphanage formed itself in the house of the old men.

The boys were quick to learn, and they received the truth with open hearts. They were not baptized, but all were instructed, and Dzing was only waiting until he had a certain number sufficiently prepared, whose steadfastness had been well proved, to send down the river for a priest. Before this time arrived, however, the Boxer rebellion broke out, and terrible stories of the rebels’ treatment of Christians came to Ong-zih.

In a village not far off, the only Christian in the place was implored by her relations to apostatize, so that it might be said that there were no Christians in the neighborhood. This she indignantly refused to do, horrified at the suggestion of denying the God who had come to her in Holy Communion. Then, in the hope of saving their own lives and property, her neighbors fell upon her and cut her into pieces, unaware that by so doing they were insuring her the reward of martyrdom. In another place those who stood loyal to the Faith were thrown by the Boxers into a deep pit and slowly buried alive. The words of the Creed chanted by the martyr band were interrupted once only, and that was when one amongst their number struggled to escape, and her persecutors, thinking the woman wished to apostatize, freed her from the half-filled pit; but she, seizing a child that someone was holding in his arms, jumped quickly back amongst the martyrs. The child had been baptized, and its mother did not wish to deprive it of a martyr's crown. So all together, by a gradual, horrible death, the whole band passed together to glory everlasting.

Such things as these made many of the parents at Ong-zih forbid their children to go again to the house of Dzing, and the little congregation of catechumens was thus reduced to four old men and a dozen little orphan boys. Fearing for these children the fate of death, Dzing decided to leave the village and seek for safety in some stronger center of Christianity. Very visibly God's hand must have protected these curiously contrasted fugitives, for in their long journey they managed to escape all harm from the Boxers and to obtain enough food to keep themselves alive. Dzing had hoped some day to claim what belonged to him and to his friends at Ong-zih, when the rebellion was over, but so far he had been able to do nothing towards getting back his own. The long journey, the hiring of boats, the feeding of so many mouths for so many months, had carried off everything that they possessed; and so, penniless, helpless — some from age and some from youth — they had

at last found a convent and thrown themselves upon the mercy of the Sisters.

Four feeble old men, ten helpless little children — how could they be refused? No one knew better than “*Ma Sœur*” how tightly the inmates of the convent were already packed; no one had better reason to know how empty was the convent purse, how scant the incomings towards refilling it would be. Four old men, each costing fifty shillings to feed for a year! Ten orphans, whose food could not be provided for less than forty pounds during the same time! Where was this money to come from? To the questions which had troubled Dzing for so many years there had been answers, and at last he had found them; but for “*Ma Sœur*” there was no answer.

“I was homeless and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me.”

The question remained unanswered, but with the words of God Himself in her ears, “*Ma Sœur*” could not bring herself to refuse the shelter that was demanded of her. Yes, it was demanded, not asked, for it never occurred to Dzing that God would fail him in his need. So they were admitted, he and his old men and his bevy of little children, and in the temporary chapel all the catechumens received the waters of Baptism.

Dzing’s labors were over; he had guided his little company into a harbor of peace, and his last days were to be spent among the children he had saved, ministered to by the charity of the Sisters. His life may yet be long, for with such good care as they receive, the old men in the hospice seem loath to die. The boys are beginning to earn a little at the looms, which the Sisters have been enabled to put up again. By strict economy, and, alas! by refusing many piteous appeals, “*Ma Sœur*” is able to defray her daily expenses; but for the future her question still remains unanswered, in spite of the appeal it holds for all: “Where is the money to come from, to keep all these?”

MACARTHY'S MESSAGE

BEG pardon, sir—”

The steward of the steamship *Siren* accosted the first officer, Mr. O'Kelly, as he stood by the bulwarks looking out over the wide expanse of waters that lie to the east of the Chinese coast.

“ You'll excuse my mentioning it,” he went on, “ but it is about the poor fellow who is dying down below. He's an Irishman like yourself, sir, and he's took a fancy to see you. I thought maybe you'd be good enough to step that way.”

“ All right, Johnson,” replied Dermot O'Kelly; “ of course I'll go, if it pleases him. But is he really dying? Is there no hope? Don't you think that he may pull round after all? ”

Johnson shook his head.

“ He's too far gone for any pulling round in this world, sir! Indeed, I doubt if he'll see another night. He's quite conscious just now, though,” he added, not liking to ask the officer to go at once, yet anxious that his shipmate's last request should not go unanswered.

O'Kelly was not slow to take the hint, and, turning, he made his way down to where the dying sailor lay.

“ Johnson says that you were asking for me, Macarthy,” he said, bending over the sick man, and taking the wasted hand that lay upon the rough coverlet. “ If there is anything that I can do for you, any message that I can take, you know I'll gladly do it.”

“ There is a message, sure enough,” replied Macarthy weakly, looking up with wide-open eyes into the officer's face. “ You're an Irishman yourself, sir, and you know, or, rather, may God keep you from ever knowing, what it is to be dying

without a priest. You are the only Catholic aboard, sir, or I wouldn't venture to ask it. But I'd die easy if I thought you'd let me make my confession to you, and when you land in the old country, and you go to the priest on your own account, maybe you'd tell him my sins too, and he'd pray to God for the forgiveness of them for me."

The unexpected demand fell like a thunderbolt on the listener. Every word cut him deeper. "When you go on your own account!" How long was it since he had entered a church on his own account?

The *Siren* was a merchant vessel, and most of her trade was with the ports of China. During the long weeks of her outward and homeward journeys the crew was debarred from participation in religious services of any kind; for the captain was a rigid Presbyterian, who looked with equal disapproval on the Protestant tenets of the great number of those under his command and upon the Catholic religion to which O'Kelly and MacCarthy nominally belonged.

At some of the ports of call in China there were Catholic missionaries to be found, and if the *Siren* happened to be in port on Sundays, MacCarthy had occasionally managed to attend Mass. To frequent the sacraments had, however, been out of his power, for the priests whom he had come across had been, without exception, unable to speak or understand the English language.

Had Dermot O'Kelly wished to practice his religion, the same obstacle would have stood in his way, for he could speak neither French nor Portuguese, and the clergy in the towns which could boast of a resident priest belonged to one or other of these nations. Had he been so inclined, he could, of course, have practiced his religion when at home, but if for month after month a man has nothing to bring his religious duties to his mind, has no opportunity or possibility of hearing Mass or sermon, or even of speaking to another Catholic, it is not for

those at home, who have churches at their very door, to judge him, if he gradually becomes a Catholic only in name. So it had been with Dermot O'Kelly. He had drifted away so gradually, that until now he had hardly realized how far he had gone from God.

"When you go on your own account!" How could he tell the dying man, who spoke so simply and so certainly of his religion, the state of mind, or rather, the indifferentism, into which he had fallen? But there was no resisting the pleading of those failing tones. The officer fell on his knees by the rude bunk and buried his face in his hands.

"God help me, Macarthy!" he cried, in suppressed tones. "Who am I that you should confess your sins to me? You're a better man than I am."

A dusky red rose to his forehead, and his voice grew thick and husky.

"I've neglected my religion," he went on. "I've forgotten my prayers. I've not been to the sacraments for years. Why, I hardly call myself a Catholic, and yet you ask me this—"

"There never was one of the name but was a Catholic," murmured the dying man, only half understanding the officer's passionate words. "It's coming—death's coming, and I have sins upon my soul. Will you hear me, Mr. O'Kelly? I'm a dying man, sir!"

"If you wish it. If you care—"

Pat Macarthy waited for no further permission. Joining his hands slowly together, he began the recital of his sins. He had been to confession before embarking on this last voyage, but that was some months ago. He had been thinking over the past, preparing for this, and now he spoke to the officer just as he would have done to a priest of God.

His voice was growing weaker. It was hardly more than a whisper when he had concluded. "Pray!" he gasped at length. "Pray! I can't!"

"God forgive me! I've forgotten," groaned Dermot O'Kelly.

"Anything! Any prayer at all!"

Haltingly, O'Kelly repeated the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary."

"A prayer for the dying—" He guessed, more than heard, the request.

The sailor's shirt was open at the throat, and against the tanned skin the crimson of a badge of the Sacred Heart showed out. He groped blindly for it, and O'Kelly put it gently in his grasp.

"Thy kingdom come," he read aloud.

A look of peace spread over the worn, wan features.

"Thy kingdom come," repeated O'Kelly, and the words brought back another invocation to his mind. "Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!"

The quivering lids closed gently on the tired eyes, and the dying man lay peaceful and still.

What were Dermot O'Kelly's thoughts as he knelt in the silence of that gloomy cabin? His past life came back to him with its lost opportunities, its carelessness and neglect, and he prayed as he had not prayed since his childhood, that he might be spared to carry MacCarthy's message to the tribunal of penance and to make his own peace with God. At length he rose from his knees, leaving the sailor sleeping a sleep from which he was destined never to awake.

Before night, as the steward Johnson had predicted, MacCarthy passed quietly away. From the little prayerbook that was found amongst the dead man's few possessions, Dermot O'Kelly, at his own request, read the prayers for the burial of the dead, when, with his badge upon his breast, all that was left of Pat MacCarthy was lowered to its last resting place in Chinese waters.

There was some wonder amongst his messmates at the part

that the first officer took in the ceremony, for they knew, better than the sailor had done, that, despite his name and early training, Mr. O'Kelly had virtually abandoned the Catholic religion.

"I thought you'd cut all those things," said his neighbor to him, as he unobtrusively yet decidedly made the Sign of the Cross before beginning his dinner.

"So I had, I am ashamed to say," replied the Irishman in a tone that was audible to all at table, "but I thank God that it has been given to me to see the error of my ways."

He spoke boldly, but inwardly he dreaded the inquiries and the chaffing that his words would very probably bring upon him. It may have been that death having come so near to them had made his comrades take a more serious view of life than usual, for to his great relief his words were allowed to pass unnoticed.

Outwardly O'Kelly was little changed, but inwardly he was a very different man — when three months later the coast of England came in view — from what he had been when it faded from his sight nearly a year before. Night after night, since the day that Pat Macarthy had delivered his dying errand in the unwilling ears of his officer, the young man had repeated to himself the words of that last message, thinking thereby to ensure his remembrance of that which he dared not put on paper.

At Portsmouth the *Siren* made little delay, but two days later, when she lay at anchor in the Mersey, O'Kelly took advantage of a few free hours to go and execute Macarthy's errand. In the dimly lighted church, kneeling outside the confessional to which he had so long been a stranger and waiting his turn amongst the group of penitents, he repeated once again the message that had traveled so far hidden away in his heart; and then at last he, too, knelt in the sacred tribunal.

Dermot O'Kelly told the priest his story as far as it concerned himself; but when he came to Macarthy's death, and the message that had been entrusted to him, he hesitated, paused, and finally was silent. After a moment he continued speaking, and there was a mixture of regret and amazement in his tones.

"I can't remember what he said, Father!" he stammered. "It has gone from me completely. Every night I have repeated to myself all he told me in his own words, and even to-day, a few moments ago, when I was preparing for confession, I said it to myself again. But now—I have forgotten—"

"There is no need to distress yourself," said the priest quietly. "You have done your part in coming to me here to-day. This sudden, unaccountable lapse of memory is clearly God's own ordering. It is evidently His will that the dead man's confession should never be repeated. We may surely believe that He has received and forgiven it." He went on speaking now more of his penitent than of the man who was dead, and his words sank deep into Dermot's heart, softened as it was by all that had occurred.

During the days that followed Dermot spent long hours before the altar in that quiet church, for he was considering a deep and serious problem. Perhaps Macarthy's prayers may have helped him in his decision, for when the *Siren* steamed out to sea again, the former second officer trod her decks with the single gold mark upon his sleeve, and not long afterwards Dermot O'Kelly sought and gained admittance to the Jesuit novitiate.

A CHINESE HEROINE

THE house of Hin-y-Fou stood high upon the mountain side. It was built of mud, and thatched with rice-straw, and possessed a real door,—a sure sign that its owner was a man of some consequence. This door was seldom used, for the family lived as much in the open air as under shelter, and when a traveler from the valley below happened to pass by, it showed no want of hospitality if he was invited no further than the threshold.

There it was that the master of the house sat one evening in spring, smoking his long pipe, and gazing sleepily over the rice fields, budding into green, that lay far away, yet seemingly at his feet. His house was built at such a distance up the mountain side that there was little to be seen in the foreground but rocks, with the exception of a few scraps of cultivation in their crevices—land made by patient industry. A belt of pine trees was the first sign of continuous vegetation, and, lower, palms and tea trees stretched down to where the owners of rice fields lived. Clumps of tall bamboos shaded these dwellings, some of which were made of no more lasting material than the bamboos themselves, intertwined and thatched with grasses from the river's edge.

Early in the afternoon Hin-y-Fou's piercing eye had caught sight of the blue tunic of a traveler making his way from the group of houses, dignified by the name of village, towards the steep track that led up the mountain-side, past his own dwelling and on for many weary miles to the little town of Ta-Pin-Chang. In so lonely a spot a traveler was willingly given a meal of rice and a corner in the sleeping apartment of the family, in return for whatever news he brought with him from

the outer world, and Hin looked forward to a pleasant chat with the man whose departure from Cha-Fou he had noticed earlier in the day.

“What is the news of the valley?” he asked when at length he of the blue tunic had climbed the last steep incline and had presented himself before the mud dwelling.

There was a birth to tell of in one family, and a death or marriage in another. The state of the rice crop and the promises for harvest were discussed, and last of all the traveler had something new to relate. A Christian missionary had come to Cha-Fou, a European in the garb of a Chinese, who told of a Spirit more powerful than the devil whom so many serve through fear. The Spirit of the Christians was the Lord of the souls of men, and He loved what was His own and wished every one to live well with their bodies, so that when they died their souls might be happy.

Hin listened, interested though incredulous; but there was some one inside the earthen walls who listened too, and heard with feelings so intense that she herself did not know whether it was joy or fear that filled her heart.

Fifty-five years before, a little Chinese girl of thirteen, the orphan child of Christian parents, had been married to a pagan, our Hin-y-Fou, and had been carried away by him to his little dwelling on the mountain-side, above the valley of Cha-Fou. At that time Christianity was practiced only under difficulty, and the least idea that any member of a family had leanings towards the “foreign religion” brought suspicion down upon the whole household. Marie Lieon’s name was a danger in itself, and in her husband’s family she was known as Pen-la.

Child as she was, God had planted the roots of faith deep in her heart, and she wept bitterly at being prevented from calling herself a Christian, and still worse, at being forced to take part in the adoration of hideous images. Her husband meant kindly towards her, but he did not wish to bring trouble upon himself

by humoring his wife's fancy, as he called it, and when she protested he thought it his duty to beat her. When beaten, the poor child wept, and to dry her tears Hin sternly administered another beating.

Little wonder was it that such treatment gained Pen-la's outward submission; yet, in all those long long years during which she never saw a Christian, never heard one spoken of, she did not once omit saying the Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity that she had learnt in the days of her childhood. Faith had been imprinted with marks of blood upon her heart, for with her own eyes she had seen how members of her family had suffered, and how one at least, Pierre Ou of Long-Pin, had resisted unto death.

As the years passed by, every prayer except the daily repeated Acts, and all doctrine except what they taught, were forgotten; indeed, she had come to think that the persecutors had been victorious and that Christianity had been swept off the face of the earth. What, then, were her feelings when she heard the traveler's story!

All that night she could not sleep. The following day she could not swallow a grain of rice, so deeply was she moved and troubled. During a second sleepless night she resolved to ask her husband to take her down to see the missioner in the village. But even on the mountain the springtime had come, and there was too much work to be done on the patches of land which formed the property of Hin, for man or beast to be spared to carry out a woman's whim. In a month's time she might go; indeed, Hin himself would have business in the village then and he would accompany her.

Pen-la knew that in a month's time the missioner would be gone, for the traveler had spoken of him as merely passing through the valley. She was sixty-eight years of age. Her feet had been so closely bound in her infancy that they scarcely measured two inches in length. The longest walks she had

taken in her life were from the mud house to the rice-patches — fifty, a hundred, perhaps two hundred, yards at a time. And Cha-Fou lay six miles away, the only path to it leading over rocks and crags, through mountain streams, and down inclines so precipitous that a town-dweller would turn giddy to look at them. Everything was against her — age, habit, the custom of her country — but the angels of God kept guard over the weary old pilgrim, and nightfall found her, with bruised feet and aching bones, utterly exhausted yet triumphant, in the village where the missioner still tarried.

The principal Christian in the district had provided shelter for the missioner in his own dwelling, and there it was that the old pilgrim found him on the morning after her arrival at Cha-Fou. Mud floored, walled with bamboo, roofed with sedge and rushes, the house was no better in appearance than her own home on the mountains; yet she had barely crossed the threshold before she knew that once again, after more than fifty years, she was entering the House of God.

Mass was said, — with the self-same words, the self-same actions, which had been so familiar to her in childhood that even after all that span of forgetfulness the memory of it came back to her again. She knelt, unnoticed, amongst the little band of regular worshippers, and the loudness of their chanted prayers covered the sobs and exclamations that escaped her lips, mingled with the few words of prayer she still remembered.

An instruction followed, given in simple language, explaining the simple truths that all Catholics are bound to know. The old, tired, wayworn woman was a child again. Marie had been her name in those long past days — Marie, after the Mother of God. The rest of the congregation were silent whilst the priest was speaking; but old Marie, forgetful of everything in her newly-found happiness, could not control her tongue.

"The Son of God who died so as to make us happy for ever," she murmured. "It is true! It is what the priest taught us long ago. The sin which is born in us, and which the holy water of God can wash away—the same, the same—it is my religion—it is what my mother taught. The Great Spirit is a God of mercy, not of fear and punishment as others would have one believe—but I never believed that, never! Oh, joy, and praise to God!" Her voice was broken with tears, yet a wonderful light shone over her, and the priest, without a single question, knew that she had been baptized.

When the others had dispersed and gone to do their daily tasks, Marie still knelt on, and the missioner learned her story. She had made her First Communion years ago. It all came back to her now, and her one wish was to receive the Redeemer of mankind into her heart again. She was still with the priest, listening to his words, interrupting him with cries of joy and thankfulness, asking him questions, telling of her own past, when voices on the threshold told her that she had been followed from home. Her husband and youngest son had come to fetch her.

She was ready to face his displeasure, ready to suffer, if necessary, for her newly-found religion; but Hin-y-Fou, in his relief at finding her in safety, was easily appeased, only he insisted that she should return home at once. Vainly she protested, raising her voice and weeping loudly; and at length the old man relented in so much as to offer hospitality to the priest, if, when his time at Cha-Fou was over, he would come to the mountain dwelling and give the religious rites that his wife demanded.

Then came a week, spent by Marie in joy and prayer. Her sons, in whose hearts, in spite of her own ignorance, she had been able to plant some feelings of true religion, helped willingly to prepare a room, and decked it out in the gayest fashion that they knew for the expected visitor; and then at length he

came. For the second time in her life old Chinese Marie received Holy Communion, and the first time had been fifty-five years ago.

The priest stayed in the house of Hin-y-Fou for a fortnight, and when leaving he promised to return. The months passed by. Every night and every morning Marie knelt to pray, but now not alone. The heathen images and emblems had long ago been burnt; a poor representation of Jesus Christ dying on the Cross reminded the whole household of the missioner's words; and young and old — husband, sons, and little grandchildren — had learnt to answer the prayers that the old woman gave out. They were waiting, preparing themselves to receive the sacrament of Baptism, and when the time drew near for the priest to return, not a day passed that one of the family did not go to Cha-Fou, to find out if he had already come.

On returning to Kony-Tcheon, after his time spent in the house of Hin-y-Fou, the priest had told his Vicar-Apostolic, Monseigneur Faurie, of old Marie's story; and when he returned to fulfill his promise, he was commissioned by Monseigneur to find out if the old woman remembered anything of the times of persecution, and especially if she could give any details of the martyrdoms that had taken place at Long-Pin near where her home had been.

Once again persecution was threatening the Church in China, and the few old people who remembered the sufferings of former days were unwilling even to speak of them, and it was therefore very difficult to obtain the evidence which was required concerning the martyrs whose cause for beatification it was hoped to lay before the Pope. Even Marie hesitated to answer the priest, fearing, perhaps, to try the newly-won faith of her family by telling them what they might soon be called upon to face. It needed careful questioning, and even at length a command under obedience, to force her to speak.

Then she told of the dreadful days, whose horror had been imprinted on her childish brain, and especially was she able to give a full account of the sufferings of Pierre Ou of Long-Pin. As she spoke the horror of it seemed to pass away. Her own life was drawing to a close, and in the death of the martyr she only saw a sure and certain path to happiness. Her fear of frightening her family quite disappeared. Instead of shrinking from the subject, she introduced it of her own accord, dwelling on the honor and the joy of martyrdom, so that the pain and dread were quite forgotten.

She was getting too feeble to do much work. Her daughters-in-law took her place in managing the household, whilst she sat and prayed; and, pondering over all she had told the priest, a great wish for martyrdom sprang up in her heart. News came from time to time of uprisings against the Christians; and districts where religion had been flourishing were plundered and pillaged by fanatical revolutionaries, who confounded religious and political hate, and brought sorrow and bloodshed even into their own families. Cha-Pou was so remote a district, and the number of Christians was so small, that Hin-y-Fou and his sons congratulated themselves upon the likelihood of being overlooked. Only Marie regretted the apparently remote chance of martyrdom.

Then one day the revolutionaries were suddenly found to be approaching. In the village below there had been no time to escape; but up on the mountains the Hin family received a warning. Hurriedly burying whatever they could not carry off with them, they deserted their little homestead, and sought shelter in the caves, known to them, but impossible for strangers to discover, in the rocky heights above.

When, however, the moment came to leave the house, old Marie refused to go. She told them that she had wished too long for martyrdom, for any threat or plea to persuade her now to fly from it. She could not walk, and absolutely and decidedly



MARIE

she refused to be carried. At length her sons desisted from their persuasions and she was left alone.

From far down in the valley the sound of voices, harsh and discordant, was wafted up to her. The house was bare and empty, and she dragged herself slowly and painfully to the door. Her rosary beads were in her hands, and her lips moved in prayer. There was nothing now to be seen in the valley. The rebels were mounting to the house, which had been pointed out to them from below as the dwelling of a rich man and a Christian.

They came — a hideous, wicked crowd, eager for plunder, yet not so lost to all sense of what they had been taught to consider right, as to disregard and ill-treat the aged. Marie sat unmoved before them. She did not fear, because the worst that they could do to her would give her her heart's desire.

“Where are the Christians of this household?” asked one of the leaders of the band.

“Gone away,” replied Marie, her fingers still holding the last bead of her rosary on which she had said a Hail Mary.

“And why have you stayed?” said one, when it was evident that her words were true, that the rest of the family had fled.

“Because,” replied Marie firmly, “I wish to become a martyr. I have waited for you, and now you have come to give me a crown that will last for ever.”

She stretched out her arms in the form of a cross, expecting her death-blow, and anxious to die as her Redeemer had done. But the pagans with a united impulse drew back. She was old — and the Chinese venerate old age — and she was very brave.

Marie closed her eyes. Perhaps she had been presumptuous to think the crown of martyrs might be hers. Her arms sank down again, she bowed her head, and tears of disappointment trickled over her cheeks; but her lips still moved in prayer, and the words they said were: “Thy will be done!”

A few hours later, when the rebels had finished their work and disappeared over the mountains, the Hin family emerged from their hiding-place and descended cautiously to the spot where their home had been. It was ruined now, pulled down and laid waste. Their crops were spoilt. Anything that could be carried off was gone. But, almost where they had left her in the morning, old Marie was sitting, unhurt, still praying, with her rosary in her hands.

BENEDICTION

PERSONALLY I have no devotion to foreign missions."

The speaker and I had made acquaintance from the fact that we went to the same chapel, in a very foreign mission, but beyond our common religion we had nothing, not even a common nationality, to bind us together.

I had heard all her arguments often before, and first, of course, came the plea that so much was wanted at home, where charity is supposed to begin. I protested — feebly, perhaps, for though I knew I was right, one at least of her arguments did appeal to me — that there was no getting over another and a very plain command, "Go ye and teach all nations." But I am not eloquent, and my companion certainly had the best of the argument, if it can be so called, when I could only reiterate my text, and we entered the chapel, each of us still thinking — I knowing — that we were in the right.

It was a poor little church, small and tawdry. There were pink paper roses on the altar, I remember, with silver foliage that made one think involuntarily of the last wedding-cake one had seen. There were two or three statues, sadly misshapen figures to our way of thinking, and all of them were gaudily colored. In front of us were two native ladies, their silken robes and beautiful gold and jeweled ornaments contrasting strangely with the coarse grey cotton gloves — one wondered if they had ever been meant to be white — which were drawn off as Mass began, showing hands that certainly looked unwashed, wearing a profusion of rings, one of which consisted of a really magnificent emerald.

On the other side from where we knelt, the boys belonging to the mission school, with their teachers and catechists, were

packed closely together; and as they prayed aloud, and very, very loud, in their own language, private devotions were practically out of the question. When it came to the recital of the rosary in Latin, one could follow if one's fingers were closely embedded in one's ears, otherwise the body of sound made it quite impossible to make out any individual words.

We had expected a High Mass, to be followed by Benediction; at least a slip of paper, with the information that "there will be Great Mass, with Salute, at ten o'clock," had been sent to my companion by the Friar, whose beautiful face remained serene, wrapped as he was in his own prayers, throughout all the din of his schoolboys' devotions.

There was an archway at the right side of the altar, with a light curtain hanging loosely across it, and when this was raised we became aware of another crowd of natives, women and children, pressing as closely around the Franciscan Sisters, who were evidently in charge of the schoolgirls, as the boys and men were pressing each other behind us and at our side.

After Mass, Benediction began. The music was no louder and only slightly more unmusical than the chant of the prayers had been; and by again stopping one's ears one could follow the familiar words of the "O Salutaris", then of the "Tantum Ergo".

Towards the end of this latter hymn, we became aware of a scuffle that was going on in the boys' benches. Evidently some one was trying to fight his way out from amongst that closely packed mass of humanity. First one boy stepped into the aisle, then another, and another, until six or seven had disentangled themselves from the rest. They were big boys, twelve years old or more, and, quietly now, they approached the altar and genuflected. Then, passing through the sanctuary, which had a railing but no gates, they dived into the darkness where the women were kneeling.

Now we could hear, though we could not see, that another

subdued scuffle was taking place, and then as the last words — there were no distinguishable notes — of the hymn died away, the leader of the boys reappeared in the sanctuary.

But this time he was not alone. His arms were raised almost in a line with his shoulders, and his hands were outspread, encircling the body of a tiny child. It may have been anything from six months to a year old; and though its face was turned away from its bearer, for the child was held in the same direction that the boy was walking, it seemed perfectly happy, and comfortable too, although its only garment, a little blue tunic or shirt, was forced by the boy's hands to play the part of a mere necklace, and the little yellow legs were free to kick, unhampered in the least.

One after the other, the boys who had disappeared came back and ranged themselves along the lower of the two altar steps, each one laden as the leader was; that is, each one carrying a baby in his arms.

Then, for the first time since the whole ceremony began, there was silence in the little church. Even at the Elevation some at least of the congregation had expressed their devotion aloud, but now there was perfect stillness, broken only by the sound of the bell. The priest raised the monstrance, and there was a movement amongst the boys on the altar steps, for each one wished his own particular charge to be the nearest to get the blessing.

When he turned slowly round to face the congregation, the priest paused a moment longer than is usual at Benediction, and I could not help looking up.

He stood quite forward, and seemed almost to be bending over the little yellow bodies that were being held up. The sleeves of his coarse habit made the cope stand out at each side of him, so that all of them, the six big boys and as many tiny babies, seemed to be grouped together under his protection. Above their heads he held the monstrance immovable, and in

the intense quiet one could hear the people behind breathing. Then suddenly there was a sound, a laugh — yes, a gurgling baby cry of joy! — and the glittering foot of the silver monstrance was gripped by a tiny hand. It was the midmost baby, and the priest could not but wait until those brown baby fingers unloosed themselves, for did not Christ Himself say: “Suffer the little children to come unto Me”?

As we walked back from church together my acquaintance was silent. I had no wish to speak, for I felt that a more than human decision had been laid upon our argument. But before we had gone very far she suddenly stood still and spoke.

“It was beautiful!” she said, shortly and decidedly — and the sand at our feet was ground to dust under the point of her parasol. “Beautiful!”

MING-LO'S RESTITUTION

SHE was an old woman, unlovely and unclean both as to her person and her surroundings, but her redeeming quality was her devotion to her husband, and it was because of him that we first came to know her. They lived in one room opening into the court of what had once been part of a great Fu or palace. All around were the remains of ruined grandeur, and, like their dwelling-place, the old people themselves had seen better days.

A Christian family who lived within the precincts of the same Fu told us of them, saying that the Tai-tai — they gave her the title that had once been hers, of “mistress of the house” — would not resent a visit; she even might be grateful in her own way for it, as her husband was in such a dreadful condition that anything to ease his pain would be acceptable. And he was indeed in a dreadful condition. It took tact and patience to get his bed put into a bearable state; and it was only when we left him, swathed in clean bandages, with soothing ointment on his sores and an acknowledgment of relief upon his lips, that the Tai-tai relaxed her suspicions and joined in the old man’s thanks.

She came with us into the court, and there we explained to her, not only that cleanliness was desirable in itself, but that for her husband’s sake it was just then of necessity, and we suggested the first steps in the desired direction, which might be taken before we came again to renew our dressings. Fortunately, owing to its original magnificence, the walls of the room were tiled, and so lent themselves easily to cleansing; and as on our second visit various unsavory heaps had been removed, we were better able to judge of the poverty of its occupants. It

was apparent in the old people themselves, as in their dwelling, that they had seen better days; and the old man, when our remedies had succeeded in easing his pain, showed unmistakably the traces of a good education. Gratitude for our ministrations certainly softened his heart towards us, but apart from that he seemed to take an intelligent interest in Christianity, and when we suggested bringing him books he accepted our offer eagerly.

First we had to cure the poor old eyes, that dirt and ignorance had brought to a revolting state; but when care and time had done this, he began to study the catechism, with the result that at every visit he had a string of questions waiting to be answered. The Tai-tai's mind was a curious mixture of the ignorance of a well-to-do Chinese woman and the shrewd common sense that the necessity of mixing with her fellow-creatures had given her. Her husband studied Christianity critically, weighing every argument before coming to a conclusion, and so climbing very slowly but gradually towards the light. With her it was different. God gave faith, but though she felt intuitively that peace and consolation were to be found in the Catholic religion alone, she could not take the decisive step. We thought at first that she was only waiting for Ming-lo to reach the same place by study that the grace of God had placed her in, apparently unaided, but as the months passed by another reason became known.

Where the very tiny pittance came from which kept the household going, was long a mystery. The better-class Chinese are not communicative, and poverty had not loosened the tongues of Ming-lo or his Tai-tai. That the direst poverty did exist was glaringly apparent, yet we always had to ignore the fact; and the nourishment with which we supplied our patient had to be administered in the forms of medicine. But there were so many others needing our help that we could do little for the old couple in the Fu, and it was a relief at last to dis-



THE TAI-TAI

“They lived in one room opening into the court.” (Page 49)

cover the existence of a grandson—a model for every other grandson in China, according to the Tai-tai's account—upon whose bounty, it appeared, the household was maintained.

Ming-lo Junior was a clerk in one of the great tea factories at Hankow, and if we had paused to consider what the Tai-tai called his munificence to his grandparents, we might have guessed more nearly the extent of his so-called princely salary. But knowing the old people's pride, we fancied the grandson did not realize the depths of poverty into which they had fallen, and we took it upon ourselves to enlighten him.

It was only years afterwards that we learnt the whole history of what that letter brought about.

Hankow is the central city of the great tea market of China. It lies on the banks of the Yangtze, or rather, for half the year it stands high above the river, and for the other half it is flooded by the waters that rise and rise until the settlement streets and all the lower parts of the city are inundated. Of all dirty towns in China, Hankow has the reputation of being the dirtiest, and this may very well be the case considering the density of its population, over four million human beings being packed away in its narrow streets and courts. May and June are the busy months in the tea city, and in the sweltering heat all the most important business of the year, that relating to the first "flush" or crop of hand-picked teas, is carried on.

Ming-lo's employers owned the largest brick-tea factory in the city, and fourteen hundred workmen carried on the business there. Brick-tea is a commodity chiefly manufactured for the Russian market; for Russia, besides buying all the choicest of China's teas for her home consumption, also imports tons of compressed or brick-tea for use in Mongolia and Siberia. Brick-tea is made from the coarse leaves, the broken and refuse tea, stalks, dust from the tables, bins, and floors of the drying-rooms at the tea farms and the factories where the fine teas are

prepared. Labor is so cheap in China that a greater part of the process is carried on by hand instead of by machinery, and wretched-looking coolies, their nostrils filled with cotton-wool to prevent their breathing in the dust, grind and sift the refuse and weigh it out into two-pound packets.

Ming-lo's business from July to January consisted in seeing to the weighing and packing of these bricks, which under his supervision were labeled with Russian-lettered red paper labels and ranged away in baskets, each one containing seventy bricks. Had our letter reached Hankow during this season, Ming-lo would have had neither the temptation nor the opportunity of doing what he did. We dwelt upon the old people's need, saying openly that unless more nourishment could be provided for the invalid he must certainly die, and that the Tai-tai would hardly survive him who was all the world to her. We wrote in ignorance of Ming-lo Junior's touching affection for his grandparents, and also of the smallness of the salary out of which he managed to support them and himself.

His wages at the tea factory would have been quite insufficient to do this; therefore, instead of spending in idleness the months when the brick-making trade was dormant, Ming-lo hired himself in the spring time to a tea farmer in the neighborhood. Here it was that our letter reached him. Had we but known it, our words struck the young clerk on his tenderest point. He was doing his best to keep the old people in comfort, every penny he could spare was sent to them, but what wages can a man expect, in a market teeming with laborers who will work all day for the price of one pipe of opium? In spite of their poverty, the old people had contrived to give their grandson a smattering of education. With this, with a pride in the past glory of his family, and a very deep love for the only two surviving members of it, Ming-lo had gone out into the world to make his fortune. Pride of race and love of his two grandparents, his strongest characteristics,

were wounded by our letter. Can we blame him much, heathen as he was, for what followed?

A Chinese tea farmer needs to be very cautious and wily in his dealings with his farm hands, but it sometimes happens that, even in spite of all precautions, his underlings outwit him. The first flush, "leaves of the second moon," as they are locally called, are the treasure of the tea farm, and the delicate tips of the new twigs are carefully picked by hand. As Ming-lo had worked steadily and honestly for several years, doing this under the same master, when temptation came to him his former good conduct made it easier for him to do as he was tempted.

Ming-lo's master was somewhat more advanced than his neighbors, and he was in the habit of taking at least his first crop direct to the market himself. The very boat that took our letter up the river was to have taken him and his thick paper sacks of tea to Hankow, but fate intervened. The merchant for some reason was unable to make the journey, and judging from his past record that Ming-lo could be trusted, he deputed the young clerk to go in his place. It was a new experience for Ming-lo to stand as a seller in one of the big brokers' offices, but he proved himself a capable bargainer, and when his master's sacks were at last emptied into the merchant's huge bins Ming-lo was the possessor of sixty Mexican dollars, a sum so huge to him as to be positively overwhelming.

His instructions had been to return immediately to the tea farm. Indeed, the farmer had taken the precaution of writing to a friend and asking him to accompany Ming-lo to the merchant, to witness the transaction there and see messenger and money safely off by boat again. The letter had been sent by the same boat that Ming-lo traveled on, and by hurrying to his bargaining the young man had succeeded in evading this supervision. On leaving the office, his steps were turned, not to the bank where the up-stream river boats lay, but to a temple that

overlooked the English settlements. Here, with all the seriousness of a religious rite, Ming-lo laid out several "cash" in the purchase of joss-sticks, and whilst these were burning before a hideous idol, he made a long prayer in which he explained how he was obliged for the sake of his grandparents to keep the money that he had got for the tea merchant, but he made a solemn vow to rest neither day nor night until he had repaid what he called the loan.

When Ming-lo appeared in the old Fu we knew nothing of all this. He seemed to us a quiet young man, and, from all he did for his grandparents, he was evidently in easy circumstances. He told us that in coming home to answer our letter in person he had been obliged to give up his position at Hankow, and he evidently expected that we should do something towards helping him to find other employment. It so happened just then that we were able to find him a place, one which he fills to-day and for which we have never had reason to repent having recommended him.

It became apparent, immediately after his return, that it was fear of the grandson's opinion which had prevented the Tai-tai from becoming a Christian. But when the younger Ming-lo began to study the books we had lent to his grandfather, and followed this up, first by an occasional visit and later by a regular attendance at the mission chapel, the old woman held back no longer. We had the happiness of taking her to the priest for examination, and after the usual time of probation both she and her husband were received into the Church.

If we hoped, as we did, for the grandson's conversion to follow, how much more deeply did the old people long for the same thing! They were still poor, but it was decent poverty. Now, although it did strike us as time went on that the whole of Ming-lo's salary was not being spent on household necessities, care and the comforts that the young man provided at the time of his home-coming wrought a cure in the old man, and

he was enabled after some months to crawl as far as the chapel on the Tai-tai's arm. They were real heartfelt converts, and their religion brought them much consolation. We guessed that in the long hours that they spent before the Blessed Sacrament, their prayers were offered for the conversion of their grandson; but although we felt certain that young Ming-lo had learnt, from his grandparents and their books, more than most catechumens know, and we judged, from his face at Mass and Benediction — services which he grew to attend regularly — that he believed in Catholicism, still he never asked and he made no move to seek admission to the Church.

This was a sad disappointment to the old people. But, so true is it that for every trial God sends its own comfort, that when the old man was laid at peace in his last resting-place, the Tai-tai's sorrow was assuaged by the thought that, face to face with his God, Ming-lo would obtain the prayer of their old age. It seemed that her prayers in Heaven were needed too, for before long the room in the old Fu had but a single occupant, and he was not amongst our list of Catholics.

Once, just at the time of his grandmother's death, we appealed to Ming-lo, thinking perhaps that, an opening being given, he might speak of the difficulties that evidently stood in his path; but our conversation only ended in showing us that a mysterious something did indeed hold him back, though the mystery remained concealed.

Five years passed by. Ming-lo, still a heathen, still a regular attendant at the mission chapel, had risen in the esteem and in the employment of his master. We still prayed for him, or at least he came in under a general heading of intentions, and in this way too he had the benefit of the prayers of those who are unable to work for foreign missions, yet who help us immeasurably by praying for us and our people. Our hopes concerning his conversion had grown very feeble, when one morn-

ing, without any warning, he came to us, and with the air of a man who is casting aside a crushing burden he told us his story.

He knew he had done wrong in stealing, even for a good cause, but it was only when he began to understand the Catholic religion that he realized how he had broken the laws of God as well as the laws of man, and he had made up his mind that until he repaid the money he had stolen, he could not ask to be received into the Church of Christ. Had he only inquired further he would have learnt that merely a firm purpose of amendment was needed to ensure the forgiveness of God, and that so long as he was doing his best to make restitution he could have been received. The long years of waiting had been a time of real penance to him. He knew how ardently his grandparents wished for his conversion, yet, acting up to his mistaken sense of duty, he had kept silence even to the end.

But now at last his self-imposed trial was over. Every penny of the stolen sum had been earned and saved, and was now repaid. How in the first place he had managed to get away from Hankow, we never exactly knew; but in a country of such overpowering numbers of inhabitants as China possesses, things can be done that would be impossible in the West. How he sent back the money, and made sure of its safe arrival without disclosing his whereabouts, also remained a mystery. Still he did do it, and then he went to the priest to be baptized.

His time of probation had been long enough. This expiation of his fault was marked by the reception of four sacraments — Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation — for the Bishop happened to be with us just then. And on the day of Ming-lo's First Communion there was a reflection of Heaven in his eyes, the Heaven where the old couple were praying and waiting for him.

LEST THE ENEMY PREVAIL

WHEN Mr. Hathway landed in China he heard rumors of discontent inland, but even the authorities had thought so little of what was said that he had been given permission to continue his travels, without any hesitation. Later, a French missioner had warned him that a rebellion was brewing, but when he repeated this to some Europeans with whom he was staying, they were skeptical as to the accuracy of the report, and told him he might go on his travels in safety. Such things were always being said in China, and nothing came of them. Then one day, coming to a small town, many days' journey from the coast, he found himself without further warning in the midst of the Boxer rebellion.

There were half a dozen Portuguese in the place, some Frenchmen, and an Irishman, Owen O'Meara. Mr. Hathway and his servant, a countryman of O'Meara, made up the number of the European defenders of the many helpless native Christian women and children; for all the able-bodied Chinese Christian men had gone to join the Christian army, a detachment of which was not far off. The only hope of escape for this little band lay with this detachment, to which a messenger was swiftly and secretly despatched.

Until relief could be sent, the Europeans had to strain every nerve to keep the pagan horde at bay. The Christians had long been prepared for an outbreak such as this, and with a view to the safety of their women and children they had raised and strengthened, even beyond their wont, the high walls that surrounded the Catholic school, where native teachers taught and cared for the children — orphans and others — who had been baptized or who were being prepared to receive Baptism the

next time that a priest should come that way. It seemed impossible that such slight defences as were in their power to raise could withstand the fierce onslaughts that were made upon them. Day and night the women and children prayed to God to protect and deliver them, and their prayers were not in vain.

After three days of terror, news came, in that mysterious way in which it comes even in times of siege, that the Christian army was approaching. The besieged rejoiced and looked forward hopefully to a quick deliverance; but the Boxers, determined not to be balked of their prey, made one more attack, which was only too well directed.

A mine was laid under the walls, reaching to the houses in the enclosure. Several others had been tried, but had been discovered in time; this one, however, was partially successful. It exploded in the nighttime. The darkness was illumined by the lurid light, and the cries of children, the death-screams of grown women and men, must have sounded as sweet music to the heathen. But their jubilation was of short duration. Before dawn those on watch announced the coming of the Christians in such number that the heathen were forced to fly, having done no further damage to the little garrison than that which the mine had succeeded in causing.

It was with difficulty that some of the victims were extricated from the ruins. Twenty women and twice that number of children had been killed; two Portuguese were missing, several Frenchmen were grievously wounded, and Garret Flynn, Mr. Hathway's servant, was not to be found. All the victims were at length laid out together, and then the Englishman, going over to them, saw at a glance that the man he sought was among their number. With trembling fingers he drew back the cloth that concealed the dead man's features. "Thank God!" he murmured, as his eyes, dimmed as they were, rested on the white face; "thank God, it—it has left no trace."



THE PARADE GROUND AT HONGKONG

English-speaking residents of this British colony are much in evidence at this recreation center.

Then his mind traveled back to old Ireland, to the cottage where the dead man was loved, and he seemed to hear the voice of the mother as she had spoken that autumn day, months ago now, when he, Mr. Hathway, had gone to bid her good-bye before he and Garret started on their tour round the world.

"It's glad I am to have the boy with your honor," she had said, "but you'll not let them kill him in foreign parts, without he has a priest to help him to go straight and clean before his God?"

At the time Mr. Hathway had smiled at the idea of there being more danger to Garret in foreign parts than there was at home; but now the danger had come so suddenly that he had had no possibility of keeping his word. Only a few hours before the mine exploded, he had seen the boy kneeling amongst the Chinese Catholics, praying heart and soul with them, and surely there was no sign of grievous sin on those calm still features.

There was no minister of religion at hand to pray over the dead, but Mr. Hathway took it for granted that the other Irishman, whose acquaintance he had made just before the rebellion broke out, and who, after these days together inside the barricade, seemed like a life-long friend, was a Catholic. As a matter of course, he went to him now, and asked him to come in the afternoon and say the last prayers over the remains of his compatriot and coreligionist.

Little did the Englishman imagine, as he went to make the other arrangements necessary for the burial, with the consciousness of having done his best to carry out the wishes of Mrs. Flynn, little did he guess the tumult that his words had raised in Owen O'Meara's breast. The latter's profession had brought him to China; and, far away from any church, never seeing a priest who could speak to him in his own tongue, he had gradually come to neglect his religion. Sunday after Sunday had

passed, in such numbers as to be almost countless, with no word, no thought of prayer. Even scenes such as had passed before him yesterday had been powerless to soften his heart. Others might be struck down, others might die at his side, yet not even the dread of what death would bring to him had turned his thoughts to God.

And now he, out of all the Catholics — Chinese but deeply religious, and many of them very pious — out of all, he was chosen to pray over the dead! He had drifted into his state of indifference without any definite reasoning. Circumstances had led him to where he stood, and until now he had never troubled himself to realize how far he had strayed from the fold of the Good Shepherd. But now he had reached a turning-point. Either he must deny his religion once and for all; or sinful, almost unbelieving, he must put himself in the place of a priest of God. A solution, and an easy one, suggested itself to him. Why not simply read the prayers, as he would do anything a friend might ask him to do? But there was a meanness in acting thus, against which all his best instincts revolted. No. If he stood up and read the prayers of the Catholic Church over the body of Garret Flynn, he must do it as a Catholic and a gentleman. In his heart there must be a firm resolve to return to the practice of the Faith that he had neglected, and a determination to seek out a priest on the very first opportunity.

Then, too, what prayers could he say? What prayers did he remember beyond the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary", that he had repeated too often in his childhood ever to forget? Almost unconsciously his feet bore him to where the dead bodies were laid. They had fought together these last days, side by side, shoulder to shoulder, yet the sudden, unseen danger that had taken their lives had passed him untouched. Was this merely luck, or had a special Providence saved him? Had God spared his life yesterday only that to-day he might betray Him? A traitor! A coward! What if any man had dared to address

him so? Yet, if he denied his religion, what better than this would he be?

And so the struggle went on, a struggle fierce and bitter, as well it might be when one of the combatants was Satan himself. At length, hesitatingly, he bent over the dead man; possibly he had a prayer-book, for Mr. Hathway had spoken of those prayers said yesterday. Surely enough, there was a little book in Garret's pocket, not much more than an inch square, yet containing the few prayers that are most often needed.

Those for the dead were not long: the psalm, "De Profundis", and two or three short prayers breathing contrition and begging for mercy. One line caught and held Owen O'Meara's attention: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thou wouldest strengthen Thy servant, lest the enemy prevail against him."

Time was passing; the hour for the burial drew near and ever nearer, and the demon was not yet conquered. Then, like a child repeating a lesson, O'Meara began to say to himself the words that he had found in Garret's prayer-book. Over and over again he repeated them, till at last they seemed to drown the voice of the tempter, and he found himself searching through the little book and marking those passages which would be the most suitable to read.

The time had come. The dead man was wrapped in a shroud and laid in the grave that Mr. Hathway had had dug for him, in which with his own hands he laid him. Then he turned and signed to Owen O'Meara to take his place. With set face, and voice that despite himself was husky, he read aloud the words that proclaimed him a Catholic. The devil was baffled for the moment, but he knew that the resolution which his escaped victim had made, though apparently sincere, was not of that firm, determined nature that no wiles of his could undermine.

The Boxer rebellion put a stop to any further traveling in China for Mr. Hathway, and as soon as possible he made his

way down the river and passed on to other more peaceable countries. Before leaving the village where he had buried poor Garret, he made Owen O'Meara promise to pay him a visit when next he was free to return to Europe; but when that would be was very uncertain.

As long as O'Meara was obliged to remain in China he could not carry out his resolution of going to confession and starting life afresh. Two or three times in the year a Portuguese priest came to the town; but except through an interpreter, the two men could not communicate with each other, and as the impression of Garret's burial somewhat wore away, O'Meara did not really regret that it was impossible for him to put his resolution into practice.

A few months later a prolonged attack of intermittent fever obliged him to leave Kiém-po, and the doctor whom he consulted in the treaty port ordered him home to Europe. There was some delay before he could get permission to go, and he might perhaps have found a priest there to understand him; but the devil put seemingly insurmountable difficulties in his way; and after he had let that opportunity slip he somehow had recourse to his prayer for help—"lest the enemy prevail"—less and less often.

O'Meara stilled his conscience by maintaining to himself that when he reached England he would go to confession; but a return of fever hurried him off, on landing, to a convalescent home, where Catholicism was a thing not to be mentioned. Then bracing air was recommended, and he accepted an invitation to the Highlands. There no priest was to be found, and so he was able still to persuade himself that his resolution remained unbroken.

At last a letter came from Mr. Hathway, asking O'Meara to pay him his promised visit in Ireland, and then he knew that the time was at hand when he could deceive himself no longer. For in Dublin, where he would be obliged to spend several

hours, were there not churches in every part of the city open from morning until night, with priests ever at the call of repentant sinners? His first impulse was to decline the invitation, but at the end came words that, despite himself, he could not overlook. "I have told Mrs. Flynn—poor Garret's mother—that I expect you, and it is the first thing that has roused her since she lost her boy. She is dying fast, poor soul, but now she is praying night and day to be spared to thank you for what you did for Garret. It is her own wish, yet she always adds, 'If it is God's will.' Such resignation as hers is quite marvelous to me, but I suppose you understand it."

Once more the devil was struggling, fighting to keep this soul within his grasp, but something more than his own half-hearted prayers for help seemed to be upholding Owen O'Meara, and he sat down resolutely to pen an acceptance of the invitation.

Within a week he stood on an Irish hillside, at the doorway of the Flynn's cottage. The visitor, whose tall head had to bow to pass under the smoke-stained lintel, was ushered into the little inner room, where, scarcely less white than the pillow that supported her, a woman lay. She stretched out her hands, fragile and trembling, and, seizing the brown one that was held out to her, she pressed it to her lips.

"Isn't God good!" she whispered. "Isn't God good to the likes of me! Oh, I've prayed for your honor night and day. I've prayed since I heard what you did for my boy out beyond; and may God reward you for it, may He guide and guard you here and hereafter!"

He told her of that day in the Chinese barricade, how peaceful her boy looked, how the evening before he had knelt and prayed with the other Christians. Then, as she seemed to be drooping and tired out, a young man who had been standing by came to her bedside, and, raising her gently, held a tin mug of milk to her lips.

"Isn't God good to me!" she murmured once again. "If He took one son to Himself, didn't He leave another to mind me? I can't complain when I'm not stripped entirely."

After a little while O'Meara bade her good-bye.

"You'll come again, your honor?" pleaded Mrs. Flynn. "You'll come again if I'm in it? But now that I've seen you, I won't ask to stay if God's willing to take me to Himself."

Straight from the cottage, Owen O'Meara went to the little country chapel, and there, through the hands of the priest, he laid the burden of his past at the feet of Christ. Next morning, at the altar rails where Garret and his mother had often knelt, he offered up the first Holy Communion he had received for years, for the soul of the woman whose prayers had saved him, and who had gone in the night to rejoin her son in the land beyond the grave.

THE PRAYER OF NIEN-SE

NIEN-SE was an institution at Ta-pin-Kang. Tall for a Chinese, and very erect, she was pleasing and graceful in spite of her age, which was nearer fifty than forty. Her skin was soft and smooth; her great, almond-shaped eyes, though gentle and peaceful, told of past suffering. Her little feet were clad in silk-embroidered slippers; they were so small that when she walked she swayed like a reed in the wind, with a graceful, gliding movement. We never spoke of our admiration for her — such words in China would be considered most unseemly, especially if addressed to a widow; and even remarks about her costume were received with respectful but chilling silence. Her dress or tunic was of blue cotton with embroidery round the neck and at the wrists, and a black silk veil always covered her head. She it was who kept the priest's house in order, who cooked his meals and killed his mosquitoes, and who, with the help of the catechist who was studying for the priesthood, swept the chapel and arranged the altar for Mass.

When prayers were said aloud in the chapel — and that was on all possible occasions, for the Chinese never weary of hearing their own voices loudly raised in prayer — the voice of Nien-Se was always to be heard above the others. It was not, therefore, any dislike to hearing her own voice that made her unwilling to comply with our request to tell us something about herself. Her reticence sprang rather from a fear of troubling us with conversation that was of no interest. Once this scruple had been overcome she seemed to enjoy telling, as much as we enjoyed hearing, the story of her life.

Her father had been a farmer, living away up the river, and she was only sixteen when the parents of a young man named

Nien-sion sought her for their son in marriage. Tchang-lin made answer to his request in the terms that are customary:

“You are honoring a poor family more than it deserves. My daughter is stupid and clumsy, and I have not been clever enough to have had her well brought up.”

In spite of this discouraging reply, Nien’s father went on to ask Tchang the name of his daughter and the day and hour of her birth. After that he pressed presents on his son’s future father-in-law, in receiving which Tchang spoke again as custom dictated:

“I take these as a mark of your unchanging resolution concerning my daughter. It is by your wish that the wedding will take place. I am sorry that my daughter is not more deserving. I am afraid you will find her perfectly useless.”

It would, indeed, have been well for poor Nien-Se if these words had been taken literally, but they were received as they were spoken, as mere politeness, and the wedding day was duly fixed. Nien-Se had never seen her future husband, but she did not think of opposing her father’s wishes and she accepted the arrangement as her fate.

On the day appointed, a covered-in chair hung round with crimson curtains was taken to her home, and in it she was carried to her future husband’s house. Her face was closely veiled, and nothing could be seen of her but a muffled figure, as she made three genuflections to north, to south, to east, and to west, before crossing the threshold of the bridegroom. There, in the guest chamber, Nien, attended by his parents and his friends, awaited his bride, and the ceremonies of the marriage were begun.

A glass of wine was presented to the bridegroom. After drinking from it, he passed it to his bride. Then their hands were joined together, and a cock made of sugar was laid upon the intertwined fingers, whilst all present wished happiness for ten thousand years to the newly married couple. After this the



A CATHOLIC WEDDING PARTY

These young people — all pure Chinese and members of old Catholic families of high station — reside in Shanghai.

bridegroom's father and mother made a move as though to kneel before the young people, but the latter prevented this, crying: "We cannot submit to such a mark of deference from you!"

Then the banquet began, a repast of many dishes, lasting for hours. The bride, who had been fasting since the previous day, ate nothing of what was set before her. When the feast was over she was conducted by two women to a couch in an inner room, where her trousseau was already laid out. There were four crimson boxes, each containing an outfit for one season; two brass candlesticks; two china tea-cups; a copper jug, and a teapot. All the women of the company went round the room, criticizing or admiring these things; but at last the poor veiled bride judged, by the silence, that they had left her, and the moment had come when for the first time she and her husband would see each other face to face.

She had told us the first part of her story cheerfully, as though, in spite of the anxiety, there had been a joyful expectation of possible happiness to come. But now her voice changed and her almond eyes seemed to grow darker and more mournful.

"I was not beautiful, not pleasing in the eyes of Nien," she said sadly. "I knew it from the moment that he threw aside my veil. Since I have seen the holy pictures that you bring with you from the West, I know that I was more like the girls from your countries. Nien looked at me for a moment. Ah! I shall never forget that look! I was only a child, only sixteen years old, and for all the rest of my life I had nothing to look to but his pleasure. You, who have always had your God, cannot understand what it is to have nothing but a man's fancy to make your happiness or your misery. He flung me from him, and I fell against the corner of one of the crimson trunks." She raised her hand mechanically to a white, three-cornered scar that disfigured her temple.

"But the sight of me, lying there with blood flowing on to my bridal dress, did not move him. He turned and left me, going out to drink more hot wines. As it had begun, so did my life go on. Alas! I had no children, and Nien could find no name hard enough to call me. I slaved for him. I slaved for my father-in-law and my mother-in-law, but they, too, did not love me. I never sat at table with them, but ate the scraps when they had finished. I sought in every way to soften Nien's heart, but he never noticed me except to torture and to beat me cruelly."

One night Nien, coming in more drunk than usual, beat his unhappy wife until she could not stand. Then, seizing her by the hair, he dragged her out into the rice field and tied her there to a tree, leaving her with her clothes in ribbons and no shelter but the few bare branches above her.

"I lay there all night," said Nien-Se. "At first I was too much stunned to suffer, but by degrees I came to myself. A wet mist hung over the fields and froze my limbs, and a great terror seized upon me in my loneliness. I feared the darkness, I feared the beasts and reptiles. I knew not what I feared, but despair had nearly turned my brain, when suddenly a lurid light in the direction of our home took my thoughts away from myself and my own sufferings."

The homestead where she had been tortured for fifteen long years was in flames. Her husband, lying drunk, would surely be burnt to death. The old people, who had always been unkind to her, would perish also. For one moment a wild joy filled her being; for one moment she dwelt with rapture on the thought that with hideous suffering all her wrongs would be avenged. Then, heathen though she was, she put the sweets of revenge away from her, and with all her strength she shrieked for some one to put out the fire. Her cries were heard by a man who lived in a house close by, but all efforts were in vain, and in less than an hour a heap of ashes, and some charred remains, were

all that was left of the home, the husband, and the parents-in-law who had treated her so cruelly.

"And then, Nien-Se?" we asked.

"Then," said Nien-Se, simply, "I came to my sisters' house, and here, as you know, I found heaven on earth."

Her eyes strayed away and lingered tenderly on the little grass-roofed prayer-room, where so many hours of her life were spent.

"Poor Nien-Se!" we said softly, thinking of her past; but, low as we spoke, our words had reached her.

"For fifteen years I suffered," she said. "No day passed that I was not beaten and abused. I had little food and less clothing. I toiled and slaved with no hope before me, no reward but hatred and cruelty, and yet I would live those fifteen years again, hour by hour, minute by minute, rather than give up one hour that now I can spend in the presence of Him who loves me."

"And what do you pray for, Nien-Se, when you kneel so long before the Blessed Sacrament?"

"I pray for forgiveness for that moment in the rice field when I was glad to see the flames that burnt poor Nien," she said. "And I pray for my country, that God will not allow it to remain in bondage to the heathen, whose customs make that great gift, life, a hell upon earth to many, as it was so long to me."

Then together we knelt in the little chapel, and to the great fervor of the Chinese woman I added my poor prayers for this vast country in which are such immense possibilities for good, lying dormant for want of laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

LEARNT FROM LIPU

IN the wide veranda of a big house in the foreign quarter of one of the Chinese towns, a child lay in a hammock, overlooking the kitchen garden in which a Chinese servant was working.

The boy was English, and, judging from his small, frail body, did not appear to be more than seven or eight years old; but the prematurely aged face might have claimed more than twice that age, though he really numbered little more than ten years. Books and newspapers lay on the table before him, but he did not heed them; he lay quite still, watching the gardener at work amongst the vegetables. After a time the man approached the hammock, and in passing by he smiled and saluted its little inmate.

“Come here, Lipu,” said the boy. “Please pull me up and turn me, so that I can see you working on the other side of the garden.”

The man put down his tools and very gently complied with the child’s request. Little Hubert Hurst was a cripple. As the man bent over him, he put his arms round his neck to help himself into the desired position.

“I like you, Lipu,” he said, as he did so. “I wish you had to carry me about, instead of A-tching. He is kind, too, but there is a horrid feel about him. Why is it you are different?”

Lipu gazed down pityingly at the boy before answering.

“I am always happy, little master,” he said, “for in my heart I have a great gift.”

“Dear Lipu,” returned the child, “do tell me what your secret is. I have seen the other men point at you and chatter together, and I have been afraid that my father was going to

send you away. You have been here a shorter time than any of them, yet I like you best of all."

"Little master," replied Lipu, "I am happy because I am a Christian; not a Christian like the lady your mother, but a Christian of Christ."

By this Lipu meant that he was a Catholic. He had answered the question put to him and volunteered more information. But the boy was not satisfied.

"Tell me more," he cried. "Tell me how being a Christian of Christ makes you happy. Would it make me happy, do you think?" he added longingly.

Hubert had been born in China, and although his parents were comfortably off, he had never been to England. His father's business kept him always in Hong Kong, and going home was talked of as a pleasure to come, when years of money-making justified such expenditure. There had once been a question of sending Hubert back, in the hope that some treatment in a London hospital would cure, or even relieve him; but the doctors who worked in the naval hospital at Hong Kong, and the newcomers who came in with the fleet, agreed that nothing could be done to prolong the boy's life. He could not live to manhood, and they advised his parents to keep him with them, and to make his short life happy.

So Hubert had lived for ten years in this far-off Chinese town, kindly treated and well cared for. He was taught to read by his mother, but neither she nor his father had ever spoken to him about religion. Mrs. Hurst was nominally a Protestant. Her husband had once been a Catholic, but a life spent hundreds of miles from any priest who could have understood him had he gone to confession, had led on his part to complete indifference. The boy had been christened by a Presbyterian missionary who had happened to pass through the town when he was about two years old; but until Lipu began to speak to him of Catholic belief, Hubert had been absolutely

ignorant of all things spiritual, except that there was a Supreme Being in heaven.

He was naturally gifted with an unusually sweet disposition, and he schooled himself to be brave and patient, because any pining or show of distress on his part grieved his parents. But this conversation with the Chinese gardener was the first of many, and from Lipu Hubert learnt a higher, nobler reason for patience and long-suffering.

At first the Chinese had spoken of the goodness of God and the mercy that His love for us made Him show. Then he told of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and it was this recital that Hubert liked best of all to hear. He told his parents that Lipu had been taught beautiful things by the Catholic Sisters at Ningpo, where he had worked before coming into Mr. Hurst's service. Seeing the boy happy with his new friend, they told Lipu to look after him when he was in the garden, thus setting his own attendant, A-tching, free to do other work and at the same time easing Lipu's conscience, for though he loved to speak of what the missionaries had told him, he feared to neglect the tasks that he was paid to perform.

All through the long summer months this strange course of instruction went on, till Hubert knew as much Christian doctrine as his teacher could impart. He had learnt all the prayers that the nuns had taught in their classes, and he began to repeat them morning and night, as Lipu himself did.

The first time that Hubert's mother saw his little wasted hands joined, his blue eyes raised to heaven, and a look of more perfect happiness on his features than she had ever seen on them before, her heart smote her at not having taught him herself; and even though the "Hail Mary" followed the "Our Father" from his lips, she did not check or chide him for what she could see gave him so pure a joy.

As the autumn drew near the boy seemed to grow weaker. Lipu sometimes thought he saw a foreglimpse of heaven in the



A SCENE IN THE HONGKONG PARKWAY

Hongkong is British territory and the English language is a special asset here.

innocent, patient eyes; but the parents noticed no change in their son, and though they knew the flickering, feeble light must soon pass out of their sight forever, it came as a shock to Mr. Hurst when Hubert spoke to him one evening of his approaching death. They had been talking of his eleventh birthday, which was soon to be celebrated, and Hubert had spoken in tones of heartfelt longing.

“Oh, I hope — I do hope that I shall live until then!”

Mr. Hurst turned quickly towards his son.

“Why do you say that, Hubert?” he asked. “Do you feel ill? worse? Why do you think of — of leaving us?”

“Don’t, Father dear!” replied the boy, laying his little hot hand on his father’s cheek as he bent over him and scanned the thin, white face on the scarcely more white pillow. “You know I must die soon. I know it’s very wrong, but I am frightened to go so far away from you, because I don’t know any one in Heaven. Lipu says when boys are eleven they make their first Communion, and if Jesus had come to me once I could tell Him about being frightened, and He could perhaps have an angel waiting for me, when I have to go, to take me to Him.”

“Who told you all this?” asked Mr. Hurst in a choked voice.

“Lipu told me part, and I think the rest myself,” was the reply. “Lipu has been asking and asking when a priest would be coming down this way who could understand English, for me to make my first confession, and then perhaps I could make my first Communion, too. But there don’t seem to be any priests who can talk English in this province at all. The Sisters sent word to Lipu that they would try and find one, or if I got worse before they succeeded they would ask their own chaplain to come; and so I am learning the Chinese names for my sins from Lipu, because, although the Sisters’ priest knows Chinese very well, he is French.”

What were Mr. Hurst's feelings as he listened to his son? Did he think of the advantages of his own childhood and how little he had profited by them? Did he wonder how the child had learnt so much of heavenly things in spite of the father's indifference? Did he think that, unless he repented of this indifference and what it had led to, the parting that now loomed before him would be eternal?

"Father," — the boy's voice was eager — "will you try, too? If you promise to find an English priest for me it will be all right, because you always keep your promises."

And with bowed head Mr. Hurst promised that, if by any possibility a priest could be heard of, the boy should have his dying wish.

After this, when their eyes were opened to the change, every day seemed to bring some new reminder of their coming loss to Mr. and Mrs. Hurst. The boy spoke often and openly of his great wish, and every evening his father had to repeat to him how he had written everywhere he could think of, asking for an English-speaking priest, yet so far with no result. It went to the man's heart to see his little son turn to the Chinese Lipu for comfort in his disappointment.

At last the day came when Hubert could wait no longer. A few weeks at most would pass, and then, even if Jesus Christ had not come into his heart on earth, he would have to stand before Him in a better land. A message was sent to Ningpo, and ten days later a travel-stained French priest arrived. Mr. Hurst greeted him in Chinese, but the dialects they each knew were not exactly the same, and they could only understand each other imperfectly. To Lipu, therefore, fell the task of explanation, and Hubert's eyes proved the truth of his Chinese friend's story.

The priest learned that the child was sufficiently instructed, and with some difficulty they got through the simple confession that the boy had prepared with his faithful attendant's help.

Now that the priest had come, Hubert realized more than ever how much he longed to hear what he had learned confirmed and filled in by one of his own people. Not that a shadow of doubt ever crossed his mind; it was only the natural wish of the human heart, and especially of the heart of childhood, to unburden itself. So many little things came to his mind that he would have asked a priest in English; so much help could such a one have given him by calming his fears and saying prayers that he could understand.

But it was not to be. This little crippled child was to pass away though the grim portals of death without ever having heard an English tongue speak to him of what lay on the other side. However, he had much, much to thank God for, he told himself in his quaint, old-fashioned way. Lipu never left his side; the priest was to say Mass in his room on the morrow, the first and last Mass he would ever assist at; and, above and beyond all else, he had told Lipu to tell the boy to prepare for the Divine Guest who was coming to him, for at that Mass Hubert was to receive his first Communion.

All through the night his parents never left him, and Lipu, too, knelt by his bedside and prayed. Then with the earliest light of morning the priest returned, and Mr. Hurst for the first time for years heard the prayers of the Mass, once so familiar but long since forgotten.

Death was very near. It was as though some more powerful hand were holding back the angel's sword until the child had received his heart's desire. The room was still. The priest concluded Mass almost in a whisper. That which was passing in the heart of the dying child was too sacred a thing for any earthly sound to disturb. The little face, from which the parents could not turn their eyes, was already the face of an angel.

Strangely enough, even whilst learning the truths of the Catholic Faith, Hubert had never wondered at his parents'

want of religion. Perhaps he thought they said their own prayers, just as Lipu did, and that it was only an accidental thing that they had not spoken to him of them. Children are often curiously unquestioning, and the possibility of any one knowing God without loving and wishing to serve Him never struck the boy. Now, however, a deeper understanding had come to him. Jesus, who loves sinners even as He loves the innocent hearts of children, showed the child that there was something great, impassable, that divided him from his parents. Lipu, who had also received Holy Communion with joy and thanksgiving at so unexpected an opportunity, was nearer, far nearer, to the dying boy and his Divine Guest than were his own father and mother.

“Father,” — his voice was low and weak — “I am not frightened now. Jesus will take care of me, but, oh! I am sad because no English priest has come.”

“But, darling, you have Father Pierre! See, he is coming to you now,” for the priest, after unvesting, was returning to give yet another sacrament, that of Extreme Unction, to the child.

“He is kind and good,” whispered Hubert, “and he has made me happier than I ever was before. I know it is ungrateful of me to wish for a priest I could talk to, only it’s not for myself I want him now, because I have Jesus. O Father! O Mother dear! it is for you —” The little voice faltered and then ceased, but the parents understood.

They saw the yawning chasm that divided them from their child, and it was the most bitter moment of their lives. Mrs. Hurst reproached herself for having drifted away from God and from the forms which in her youth she had been taught to follow; but what were her feelings compared with those of her husband, who had abandoned a religion that he knew to be true, who had thrown aside the gift of faith that God had given him! He knelt beside the priest who had heard his son’s

confession in Chinese; but he was as far from a possibility of obtaining the declaration of forgiveness for his sins as though the whole of that gigantic country of China stretched between them.

Feebly the child stretched out his hand, but it was towards Lipu that it strayed. It was only an instinctive movement, yet to his parents it was the seal upon their eternal parting. Hubert, Lipu, and the priest were one in the fold of Christ, while his parents stood outside.

The day grew on, the sunshine brightened the room; but the shadow of death was on the innocent young features. Hubert's eyes had long been closed, though now and again his lips moved in prayer. Then all at once he looked at his parents, and his gaze lingered for a moment on his father's face.

"You promised!" he said, quite distinctly. And Mr. Hurst understood what the words meant. He had promised to look for an English-speaking priest for his son, and though the boy needed one no longer, he claimed the promise still; but now it was for his parents that he asked the fulfilment. Knowing this, and reading what was written under the anguish of his wife's face, Mr. Hurst answered the boy in firm tones, "We promise, Hubert!"

FATE: A PAGAN LEGEND

WOO-HOW, the little pagan girl who lived in the last house in our street, was going to be married. She had never seen her future husband, nor had he seen her; yet she seemed quite satisfied, and evidently had no misgivings as to the future.

“But suppose when you do see him, you don’t like him?” we asked her, not very wisely, perhaps, when the thing was inevitable; but fortunately our question did not trouble her.

“That will be all right,” she answered quite composedly. “You see, it is our fate, his and mine.”

“Your fate!” we repeated. “But how do you know that?”

“The fortune-teller has said so,” she replied; and, holding up a card ornamented with a figure of a phoenix, from which two pieces of red silk were suspended, “See, Fate has bound us with the silken cords of Hwuy-Ko.”

We had not then heard the legend of the silken cords, and when we questioned Woo-How about it she asked us if we had time to be seated so as to hear the whole story. We replied in the affirmative, and she smiled delightedly and began, as she said, from the very beginning:

When the parents of a young man think that it is time for him to have a wife, they employ a match-maker to find a suitable one. When this is done the same intermediary takes to the chosen one’s house, a card on which are written eight signs, indicating the day, hour, month, and year of the prospective bridegroom’s birth, and his full ancestral name. If the match is approved, the girl’s parents prepare a similar card for their daughter, and then both are taken by the match-maker to a



IN WEDDING ATTIRE

“Now for the first time the bride was allowed to remove her veil —” (Page 83)

fortune-teller who studies them and then decides whether or no it is fated that the couple should be married. When, as in the case of Woo-How and Lew-Pang, fate is propitious, the fortune-teller passes the red silk cords, which had aroused our curiosity, through each card, and they are returned to the young man's house, where they are decorated respectively with a dragon and a phoenix — creatures which in China represent the virtue of fidelity — and then one is kept by the bridegroom and the other is sent to the bride. So far went explanations, and then came the story.

Many hundred years ago, certainly a thousand, and maybe more, there was a man named Hwuy-Ko, who lived in the neighborhood of the town of Sung. He was a young man who thought himself very clever and very grand, and whenever he took a fancy to speak to anyone whom he met in the street he used to do so without ever troubling to think whether or not the stranger wished for his acquaintance.

One day he had gone into the town of Sung on business, and, being delayed, he decided not to go home that night; so when evening came he went for a walk on the outskirts of the town, where the houses were few.

The moon was shining brightly, and by its light he saw that he was not alone in his enjoyment of the cool of the evening. The figure that he saw before him was that of a very old man, and drawing nearer he found that the man was reading a book that looked as old as himself.

“ Will you allow me to congratulate you,” said Hwuy-Ko, “ on the keenness of your sight, which allows you to read by the light of the moon?”

The old man made no answer, but he bowed gravely, so that the other, whose curiosity was aroused, was emboldened to continue.

“ May I ask what the contents of the book are that you find so engrossing?”

"This is the book," replied the old man, "in which all the marriages, for all places under Heaven, are inscribed."

"All the marriages in the world," repeated Hwuy-Ko incredulously, "that have taken place since time began?"

"Exactly so," replied the reader. "And, besides that, it contains the names of all those who are to be married in future ages."

Hwuy, on hearing this, was very incredulous; but to prove the truth of his words the old man drew from his pocket the end of a crimson cord, woven in silk.

"Once I have tied the feet of two with this cord," he said, "their fate is sealed. Nothing can prevent them from marrying each other."

Hwuy-Ko did not believe the old man's words, and he questioned him laughingly:

"But if you made a mistake, and tied the feet of a son of — to those of a daughter of —," mentioning two citizens of Sung who were well known to have lived for years as deadliest enemies, "what would happen then? I am afraid even your cords would not be strong enough to make the marriage."

"Fate is fate," was the reply. "The families may have been at feud for years, they may belong to the furthest corners of the earth, but once I have tied the feet of the couple, they will marry."

He spoke so certainly that Hwuy, though unwilling, could not help beginning to believe in him.

"Are my feet tied, then?" he asked, not without curiosity; "and, if so, whom have you made my partner for life?"

Hwuy told his name, and the old man searched the pages diligently. "Your future wife," he said at last, pausing with his finger on a certain line — "your future wife is the child of the aged seller of vegetables who lives at the corner of the northern street of this town."

Hwuy had at least expected that it would be predicted he

should marry some person of great importance, a prediction which would be likely to please him even if he did not believe it, and which might make him bestow some gift upon the predictor.

“Your feet are bound to hers by fate,” went on the old man, “and nothing can come between you and your destiny.”

But Hwuy determined to put between him and this low-born maiden something that even Fate could not remove.

Early next morning he went out in search of the old woman, and on reaching the northern street of the town he found her squalid hut without any difficulty. She was a hideous old hag, and it seemed impossible that she should be the mother of the equally hideous infant, who was screaming lustily when Hwuy drew near. Yet, when he questioned the woman, she denied having any child but the one that was in her arms.

In China, so many people desert or kill their baby daughters, that a girl’s life is looked upon as a thing of little value, and Hwuy-Ko had very few qualms of conscience as to what he intended to do. Giving the old woman a present that he thought would amply repay for the loss of such a hideous, noisy child, he left the shop and hurried off in search of a man who, for very little, would undertake to kidnap the poor little thing and do away with it.

Two days later the man came to Hwuy and told him that he had done his bidding. It had been easy to get possession of the baby, and after giving her a blow on the head he had left the little body where, alas! so many other little bodies were left. On hearing this, the young man started off on a journey that he was obliged to take, quite satisfied that he had broken the silken cords of Fate.

For some years he was so busy getting on in the world that he gave no more thought to all that had happened that night at Sung, but, having become a man of some importance, he bethought himself that it was time for him to find a wife.

He laid his case before a match-maker who was renowned for her good fortune, and she promised to find him a wife who would be worthy of him. But days passed, and there seemed to be no result from her promises. Again he went to her, and she told him that, so far, the overtures she had made in his name to several families had, for one reason or another, been unsuccessful. At last, however, she did find a maiden who was suitable, but when the match was put before an oracle it was said to be utterly impossible.

When this had happened two or three times, Hwuy suddenly remembered the scene in the moonlight at Sung, so long past now that he had forgotten it, and it came to him as a great fear that, in killing the bride that Fate had intended for him, he had put himself in danger of a fate that all Chinamen dread, that of dying without a son. For it is believed, in pagan China, that the peace of a man's soul after death depends on the celebration of certain ceremonies; and if he has no son, on whom can he depend for observance of these rites?

It was a dreadful thought, and it made him regret bitterly his wickedness and cruelty. At least, for a time it had this effect, and then the prefect of the district in which he was living, at some distance from the town of Sung, offered his daughter in marriage to Hwuy. This was a greater honor than he could possibly have looked for and, besides, it was reported — for Hwuy was not, of course, allowed to see her — that the prefect's daughter was very beautiful.

The offer was joyfully accepted. Hwuy was, however, in great trepidation until the reports came back from the two oracles; but, to his astonishment and delight, he found that everything was declared to be in favor of the match, and the preparations for the wedding were put in hand at once.

On the day appointed, Hwuy's friends went half way to the prefect's house, where, according to custom, the bride was awaiting them. They then formed an escort to guard the

sedan-chair in which she sat, closely veiled, and accompanied her to the house of the bridegroom. With her face still covered, the bride was led into a room where Hwuy was awaiting her. No word was spoken, but silently they sat down, each one trying to sit on a part of the other one's clothing, for whoever succeeds in doing this becomes the ruler of the household. The next part of the ceremony was to stand before the altar in the reception-room, and there worship Heaven and earth and the ancestors of both families. After this Hwuy shared with his wife a glass of wine, which the guests took as a sign that their feasting was to begin.

Now for the first time the bride was allowed to remove her veil, and Hwuy was able to see for himself that report had spoken truly in describing the girl as beautiful. She was dressed in the usual costume that the maidens of her class in the district wore for weddings, but, unlike them, she had, hanging over her brow and eyebrow, a bunch of artificial flowers. The guests were all busy over their feasting, and Hwuy was at liberty to question his bride without fear of interruption.

“What is the meaning of the flowers that you wear at your temple?” he asked at length.

The girl raised the bunch for an instant and showed a scar that, had it been seen, would have disfigured her sadly.

“It is to cover that,” she replied.

“But how did you receive so cruel a blow?” asked Hwuy, now all curiosity. She told her story simply, but it was one that her husband listened to with growing wonder.

The bride was not in truth the daughter of the prefect, but his niece. Her father, who lived in the town of Sung, had died when she was an infant, and she had been put out to nurse with an old woman who kept a vegetable stall in the neighbourhood of their house. One day she had disappeared, and the old woman, fearful of what would happen to her for her carelessness in losing the child, had had the town searched. At

last the baby had been found, her head cut, as the scar testified, but still living. It was not known who had done this thing, but on hearing about it the prefect had sent for his little niece, and she had been as carefully guarded ever since as though she were really his daughter.

When Hwuy heard this story he was struck with fear that the part he had played in it should somehow come to light, and the happiness of his life was greatly lessened because of this fear that continually hung over him. During the lifetime of his wife nothing was ever heard of it; only, after her death, Hwuy felt that he must tell the story as a warning to others not to try and change what Fate had laid down for them.

And ever since, in China, red cords have been used to tie together the cards of a wedding, just as we saw them on those of the little girl who told us this story.

SHALL IT AVAIL?

IT was evening on Galway Bay. The sun was setting behind Arran, and its red light was reflected on the windows of a little storm-worn chapel standing amongst the boulders of that stony coast. A young woman, duster in hand, was passing from bench to bench, busy at her task, yet turning now and again towards the sanctuary, where a fair-haired child sat on a roll of faded carpet, happily engaged in poking his tiny fingers through the squares of brilliant coloring reflected from the window on to the white communion cloth.

Soon Mrs. Kinealy's dusting came to an end, the child was taken from his seat, and the carpets were spread in their places. Then, before leaving the church, the woman knelt for a moment at the foot of the altar, clasping the boy's restless hands in her own, and leading him to repeat his mother's words.

“Good night, dear Jesus!” he said. And of his own accord he kissed his chubby fingers and waved them over his mother's shoulder towards the altar, towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Every evening when the widow came to lock the chapel this little ceremony was repeated. Their home was close at hand, and the boy's good-night to Jesus was never forgotten. As he grew older he often had to turn the big key himself, and ring the Angelus bell, at the sound of which the toilers around bared their heads and said the old, old prayer to the Mother of God. All through his boyhood, even when other prayers were neglected, Kit Kinealy seldom forgot the nightly greeting, and when he began to go out to the fishing his thoughts always turned at sunset to the little chapel on the cliff,

and raising his cap he used to say under his breath the words his mother was saying at home: "Good night, dear Jesus."

Mrs. Kinealy's husband had been drowned at sea, and every time the winds blew high and the waves roared and dashed upon the rocks, covering them with foam, the widow trembled lest his father's roving instincts should show themselves in her boy, and she thanked God that for the present, at least, the home fishing contented him. Kit was a good son, and, knowing his mother's fears concerning him, never spoke of the longing he sometimes felt for a wandering life. Yet the wish was always there, and as years passed, the work in the fishing smacks grew more distasteful to him, till he sometimes felt that he could bear it no longer.

Then came a winter harder than any remembered along the coast. The old people died off, the younger ones sickened and suffered, and one day Kit Kinealy found himself free to follow his own inclinations, for his mother lay at rest in the churchyard which she had passed through, morning and night, for so many years. Freedom, now that he had it, was shorn of half its attractions, but staying at home was more unbearable still, and when the grass was growing green on Mrs. Kinealy's grave her son steamed out from Galway harbor bound for Glasgow, where he hoped to get work on some ship trading with foreign parts.

The tones of the Angelus bell, rung by a strange hand, were wafted across the water as he passed down the bay. He saw, for the last time, the chapel that was so closely linked with his childhood, and he thought of his mother who with her dying breath had prayed for his welfare. Straining his eyes through the gathering gloom for a farewell glimpse of the familiar building, he repeated once again the words of his childish evening greeting: "Good night, dear Jesus."

From a worldly point of view, all went well with Kit Kinealy. He was taken on a ship bound for the Chinese seas,



THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE CHINESE MISSIONS, AT SHANGHAI (1924)
Archbishop Costantini, Apostolic Delegate, stands in the center. Mr. Joseph Lo Pa Hong,
a prominent layman, may be seen at the right carrying a torch.

and although the life was hard he got on rapidly. After some years he became part owner of a small coasting vessel that plied from port to port in China. When on shore, he shared the home of his captain, whose daughter he had married. His whole life became bound up in the country of his adoption, and his early days in Ireland faded from his memory.

When moving from place to place, he had occasionally come across a priest and had been able to hear Mass and go to his duties, but when he settled down he was hundreds of miles from any church. There were other Catholics in the port; but it was only when a priest happened to pass that way, once a year or not so often, that Mass was ever said in the neighborhood. At first Kit Kinealy had been a regular attendant at these occasional devotions, but it is not possible for a European to live the life that he did, without deteriorating, unless he asks God to help him, and this Kit ceased to do. For many a long month he had never omitted the nightly greeting to Jesus that his mother had taught him, but at last even this was forgotten. When a neighbor told him that Mass was to be said in the town, it was only with a great effort that he attended it. He could not go to confession, for in the twenty years that he had lived in China, not one priest who could speak or understand English ever came within measurable distance of his home. Then, too, when the familiar words of the Mass fell upon his ears, his conscience troubled him with such twinges of remorse, that before long he gave up even this outward sign of Catholicism.

His wife, too, professed no religion. Her people had once been Catholics, but had drifted away into indifference, for the same reasons that were forcing her husband away from the right. Mrs Kinealy, however, was a religious-minded woman; and when a Protestant missionary, with his wife and family, came to the town, she allowed him to baptize and instruct her children. Kinealy made some demur about this, for although he

had not troubled to teach his children himself, his Irish blood resented the interference of a Protestant. His wife, however, was firm. Surely, she argued, it was better for the children to hear of God from one who could speak in words they understood, than to go once a year to a ceremony they knew nothing about and sit through a sermon delivered in a language that was foreign to them. Their father had done nothing to make them good Catholics, and sooner than see them grow up heathen she would take them to the missionary's school. She had her way, and the names of the three Kinealy children were entered on the roll of converts that the clergyman sent home yearly.

At length, when still in the prime of life, Kit Kinealy fell ill. Nursing and care were of no avail, for the hand of God was upon him. Day by day he grew weaker, and one of his friends, who had clung to his religion, spoke to him of death. But the idea of appearing before his Judge was so appalling to the dying man, that it was long before he could be soothed and quieted again.

He could not die! he would not die! His sins were upon him. It was twenty-five years since he had been to confession, ten years and more since he had been to Mass, or even bent his knee in prayer. The agony and despair of her husband were beyond anything that Mrs. Kinealy had ever known. The devil was fighting almost visibly for the possession of his soul, and although faith seemed to be re-awakening in the poor dying breast, the demon of despair was struggling to seize that faith and turn it to the sick man's condemnation.

One evening, when the dying man lay still and exhausted after one of these paroxysms of remorse that were stealing away his remaining strength, Mrs. Kinealy's little niece crept to his side and spoke to him gently. "Good night, dear uncle," she said.

The words fell sharply upon his ears, cutting him as a knife, bringing back the past with agonizing distinctness. He

turned to the child, and in eager trembling tones he whispered, "Say that again, Susie, but don't use my name; say the name —" He faltered, for he could not bring his tongue to speak the name it had forgotten for so long. "Say the name of Him you say your prayers to, Him who died for us."

Amazed, yet obedient, the child spoke again. "Good night, dear Jesus," she said softly at his bidding.

He lay quiet now, with closed eyes. It seemed as though he were a child again. He thought the Atlantic breeze played again upon his cheek, the salt spray of Galway Bay seemed to be on his lips. His mother's voice said the words little Susie had spoken. He was young once more, free from sin, and kneeling in the poor little chapel on the Irish coast.

God's grace had come to him through the words of a little child. As a starving man might ask for bread, he turned to his wife and begged her to send in search of a priest. There was a Portuguese missioner visiting a colony of his countrymen two hundred miles away, but what comfort could he give the dying man? Mrs. Kinealy, who knew nothing of the Catholic religion, did not understand that, even when confession was impossible, if the priest was assured of the penitent's contrition, either by signs or through an interpreter, he could absolve him and administer the last rites of the Church. Again and again she tried to satisfy her husband's heart-rending entreaties, but at length she sent for a Catholic friend of theirs. He came at once, and soon a messenger was dispatched to the place where the Portuguese priest had last been heard of.

Then in the sickroom the friend began to recite prayers that once more carried Kinealy's mind and heart back to Ireland and to God. The cloud of despair that had made these last days a veritable hell upon earth to him was passing away, as his lips moved in the words so long forgotten. The hours passed by. Another day dawned, but no priest came. Kinealy's eyes were growing dim; he hardly had the strength to speak

aloud. God in His mercy had taken the bitterness of despair from him, and he repeated the words of the Act of Contrition with heartfelt sorrow.

But now and again, in piteous wailing, he begged and prayed that he might not die until a priest could come to him; and, although it was no longer awful to see him, still it was agonizing, heart-rending, for those who watched. The faithful friend had never left him; and when the messenger returned unsuccessful from his search for a priest, he spoke in decided tones to Kinealy.

"You are dying, Kit," he said. "In a few hours you will stand before the judgment-seat of God. In His mercy He has given you the grace of repentance, although He has denied you the comfort of priestly ministrations. There are hundreds and hundreds in this country, who live their lives forgetful of their Maker; for their sakes will you accept this sacrifice that God calls on you to make? Offer Him the great longing for a priest that possesses you. Resign yourself to this deprivation, and your heart will then be free to prepare for the sight of Heaven with humility and contrition."

"I can't, I can't," gasped the dying man. "If our sins are mortal we are strictly bound to confess them."

"God asks for no impossibilities. He knows that you wish to go to confession. He knows the temptations you have succumbed to. He knows and rejoices that you repent."

Suddenly a light came over the dying face, and Kinealy's voice sounded loud and clear:

"I offer up the sacrifice that God imposes upon me, of dying without the help of a priest or the comfort of religion, and I humbly beg, with deep sorrow for my past sins, that God will touch the heart of one priest — I ask for only one — and inspire him to come to this heathen country, where so many Irishmen fall a prey to the devil for want of a priest who can hear and help them."

He fell back on his pillow, and though his lips still moved, his wife, who bent over him, could scarcely hear the words he uttered: "God have mercy upon me, a sinner."

There was stillness in the room. To the dying man the darkness seemed to deepen. A wonderful calm came over his features. "Good night, dear Jesus," he murmured. His last words were his mother's prayer, and as the night-mists gathered he passed quietly away.

THE VOICE IN THE GARDEN

THE house of Ly-san-ko was a gloomy, forbidding building. The high brick walls were only broken where the narrow gateway opened to the street. This gate gave entrance to a small, square courtyard, with servants' rooms at each side and a long, low, one-storied building in the center, the front of which was taken up by a great hall which was dining-room, drawing-room, and reception-room all in one. The room contained but little furniture — only a lacquered table and a double wooden divan, upon which two men were seated.

The elder of the two, Ly-san-ko himself, was a fat man with a yellow face, thick protruding lips, a small nose deeply sunk between his bulging cheeks, and little twinkling eyes, hidden behind a pair of thick-rimmed glasses, which were fastened around his ears with a bright-colored silken cord. His guest was, at the first glance, less unattractive. He was younger, slighter, and more shapely, and his eyes were bright and piercing, but their expression was so repulsive that on closer scrutiny one could hardly decide which of the men was the less prepossessing.

Upon the wall above Ly-san-ko's head hung a tablet, on which were inscribed the names of his ancestors. This was a most precious possession. On the first day of each month an offering of incense was burnt before it, for the family of Ly-san-ko were ancestor worshipers, as are so many of the heathen in China. The conversation between the two men was evidently connected with these ancestors, for, as he spoke, Ly kept glancing upwards at the tablet, and even occasionally pointing to it, while his guest nodded his head with a satisfied air.

Things seemed to be going well in the house of Ly; yet, only next door to the dining-room, one of the occupants of the women's quarters could have told a very different story. Ly-sul-Niang, the daughter of Ly-san-ko, was quite young, little more than a child, yet she was old enough to understand, and to loathe with all the strength of her being, the future which her father was preparing for her.

Usually a Chinese girl accepts, without a thought of rebellion or any feeling of pleasure or of pain, whatever destiny may be hers: and the sisters of little Niang had been no exception to this rule. When Tien-ta-yen — that is, Tien the great man — had made known that he was willing to take another wife to his home, Ly proposed, without any reference to the girl herself, that Niang should be his seventh wife, and even now they were arranging this matrimonial bargain. It was only through the servants' gossip that the girl had learned her father's intentions; and, even before she had seen Tien, she had conceived the strongest dislike to being handed over to him.

On each side of the dining-hall there was an archway, closed with a beautiful, embroidered, cotton curtain, which divided the apartments of the women from the remainder of the house. Niang, on hearing that Tien had come to visit her father, had crept to one of these archways and, peeping out from behind the curtain, had seen and watched the two men as they sat drinking and smoking together. She was a quaint little figure, as she stood hiding away under the heavy embroidery. Her black hair was twisted tightly round her head and held in its place by long silver pins. Her silken tunic, loose about the body, fell to her knees, and trousers of the same material encased her slender legs. Her feet were so squeezed and small that she could only hobble along, but she could move fast enough, as was proved when, after a long scrutiny of her future husband, she dropped the corner of the curtain that she

had raised, and, turning, fled as far as possible from a sight that was hateful to her.

All sentiment, all natural feeling, has been so suppressed and forbidden amongst the women of pagan China that they seem scarcely to possess any will or powers of their own. Before reaching this state of hopeless apathy, many of them go through a period of intense misery, whilst the instincts natural to all human hearts are warring hopelessly with the iron weight of heathen custom. Niang did not understand the feelings that were creating such a tumult within her. She did not know what she hoped for, what she wanted; she was only acutely sensible of being so unhappy, so overpoweringly wretched, that all she could do was to throw herself down, like a stricken beast, in a hidden corner, and beat her head with her hands, till the silver pins were blood-stained and her hands were cut and bleeding, moaning to herself the while in hopeless, helpless misery.

After leaving her peep-hole in the hall, Niang had passed down a narrow passage and crossed several little courtyards, ornamented with dwarf shrubs cut into grotesque likenesses of animals, real or imaginary. Away she went out of sight of the little windows where the women of the household sat gossiping over their embroidery — away, until she reached the very limit of her father's domain, where a clump of bamboos and other shrubs hid the wooden paling that separated Ly-san-ko's garden from that of his next-door neighbor. Why had she ever been born, she moaned, as she lay cramped up on the dark, wooden seat, out of reach of passing snake or crawling beast; or why had she not been thrown out in the streets as a baby and left there to die? Oblivion, anything, would have been preferable to the living death that her life had been. And, if in the past she had been unhappy, how infinitely worse would be the coming years, cooped up for ever with six other wives — the slave, not in name but in deed, of the revolting man whom she had seen just now at her father's table!

CHINESE SISTERS AND ORPHANS IN CHEKIANG

"There are in China several congregations founded for native women who wish to dedicate themselves to the service of God." (Page 97)



So much occupied was Niang with her own troubles that she did not notice for a time that the people from the house next door had also sought the shade of the bamboo clump, which grew as much on one side of the paling as on the other. They were moving about at first, and evidently one amongst them was an invalid. A couch had been carried out, and the sick man was helped towards it. There was the voice of a woman, and the clearer, shriller tones of two girls. Then a man spoke, a servant, asking if further services were needed of him, and the answer came in a strange tongue, as Niang thought. But, listening, she recognized the words as belonging to her own language, only the pronunciation of them was unusual. There was something soothing in the voice, something that she had never heard in any voice before, and, letting her hands drop into her lap, she turned her head so that the sound of all that passed in the next garden could come directly to her through the bamboo fence.

If the voice and the accent had been strange to little Niang, how much stranger to her were the ideas that the words she now heard conveyed. She did not understand it all; that first day she only gathered that the strange, yearning feeling that had always been unsatisfied in her heart was called love, and that somewhere there was One who loved everyone who had ever been born into the world. He, this wonderful Being, loved the man who was speaking, He loved the woman and the girls who sat listening, and ah! if He loved all mankind, surely He must love the desolate little eavesdropper, Niang! She held her breath to listen to the name of this Lover, tenderly, reverently as it was pronounced by the unseen speaker: "Jesus, the Son of God."

The missioner — for it was a missioner who was speaking — had given up his whole life, more than poor, ignorant Chinese women could even imagine, for the love of this Lover. He had given up his home to become a priest, and, not content with working in his own country, he had been urged by the love

of Jesus to cross the seas to the furthest ends of the earth, where the harvest of souls was so abundant, and the laborers were so sadly few. He neither expected nor earned any earthly reward. He bore poverty, exile, hardship, loneliness, at times even hunger and thirst, and, as at present, illness, for the love of God. In return he gained the gratitude of some; but his best reward was the knowledge that he was sowing seed in rich and fertile land, in the hearts of men who, when they were illumined by the light of truth, made faithful, steadfast Christians, whose faith and love would console the heart of Christ for the coldness and negligence of many amongst more civilized nations.

The missioner was now ill, struck down by fever in the midst of his labors; but though unable to continue his journeys amongst his widely scattered flock, his zeal for souls urged him to speak of God to the wife and daughters of the Christian merchant who had received him into his house and had tended him through his illness. Lying out under the shade of the trees, he spoke, never tiring, till the shadows lengthened and the short twilight began. He told them the old story, the oldest, sweetest of all stories, how Jesus became man for us; and those who sat by, although they had heard this story before, listened eagerly, drinking in the teaching of the Scriptures.

At last the darkness fell, and the priest was helped back into the house again by his companions, leaving the child Niang once more to her solitude, bewildered, but with a new-found hope and happiness stirring within her. She did not understand; there were hundreds of questions burning on her lips. She only knew that some One loved her, some One whom some day she would see; and the moments passed slowly for her, until the next day came, and at the same hour the priest spoke again in the garden next door, and again the little heathen girl listened, unseen, and learned of the doctrine of the Church.

Tien-ta-yen had left the city, and his return was not expected

for some time. But although this meant a short respite for Niang, her future hung over her like a black cloud, and she could put the misery of it away from her only whilst she was listening to the missioner or thinking out for herself the thoughts that his words had inspired. It was only when quite incapacitated by illness that the priest allowed himself such rest and leisure as these days afforded him, and very soon Niang heard him speak of his approaching departure.

There are in China several congregations founded for native women who wish to dedicate themselves to the service of God, and Niang learnt that one of the girls next door and several others from the neighborhood, were to accompany the missioner to a town down the river where such holy women had a house. Niang knew now that one must die before coming to Jesus, and that He expects each one of His beloved on earth to carry unfading gifts to Him through the portals of death. The best of these gifts is love, and that, it is true, she could give Him; but for the others — she was too ignorant, too weak, alone amongst pagans and to the outward eye a pagan herself, to lay up for Him any other gifts.

When she heard the priest speaking of a life lived for God alone — a life of frequent converse with Jesus, a life spent in gathering the gifts that He loves, the life of a Catholic religious — she felt that for her no other life was worth the living. She did not fully understand, she only followed blindly the impulses that God Himself was placing in her soul. In all her former misery, Niang had never thought of any possible way of escaping from the marriage arranged for her with Tien-ta-yen, but now an idea came to her, overpowering in its audacity, yet more and more alluring as she dwelt upon it.

Why should not she go also to this happy place of which the missioner spoke? She had never been alone in the streets, but her great desire to learn more of the doctrines of Christ and to follow Him, gave her courage to attempt what had never

before seemed possible. Every day after dinner the household retired to rest for a couple of hours, and Niang's plan was to creep out during this time, and hide herself away in the boat, which she knew was anchored close by in the river. If fortune favored her, she would be miles from home before her absence was discovered. And fortune did favor her.

Imagine the missioner's astonishment when, having gone a whole night's journey down stream, he was confronted by a small, sleepy-eyed Chinese maiden whom the sailors had discovered amongst the bales of goods that filled the stern of the vessel! Unnoticed, she had crept into this place of hiding and there had fallen asleep.

She told her story, frightened at first, but soon reassured by the kind face of her auditor. The missioner knew that Niang was but one of hundreds and hundreds of innocent Chinese girls whose naturally good instincts make them unhappy in their pagan surroundings, and who, with no knowledge of God, no hope for this world or the next, sink, as they pass from childhood to womanhood, into the condition of mere slaves — slaves to the customs of their country, slaves to their husbands, and many of them slaves to the opium eating and smoking which is the bane of their nation. He welcomed the thought of saving even one from this end, for in such souls as Niang's he found a reward for the sacrifice of his life. He knew too well what her fate would be now if he sent her back to her father's house, and he could not refuse her request to be made a Christian. So he allowed her to join his little band of travelers to the town down the stream.

There the Sisters instructed her, and she was quick to learn, for all her heart and mind were in the teaching. After a time of probation she received the sacrament of Baptism, and later Jesus came to her in Holy Communion. But the ordinary life of a Christian did not satisfy her; she longed to dedicate herself entirely to God, and this she was at length allowed to do.

It was the missioner whose voice in the garden had first awakened her to the knowledge of God, who gave her the veil, and she received it from him as the crowning gift of her life.

The outer world has no knowledge of Niang and her companions. They are only little Chinese nuns, living a hidden life in a far-off country. But day by day their prayers rise to Heaven, that God will have pity on their country, and will send to it more priests and more nuns to teach to their less-favored brethren the truths that God has imparted to themselves.

THE BEAUTIFUL LADY

SISTER URSULA answered the summons to the door of the convent at Cheng-tsing-fu, and, opening it, she found outside a woman, whose bright eyes belied the age suggested by a bent figure and an emaciated face. The woman spoke in a dialect that the Sister, an old resident in China, was able to make out, although it was not that which was spoken in the immediate neighborhood.

"I have come," she said simply. Seeing no light of understanding on the portress' face, she added: "You expect me, eh? It was the lady of the house who invited me."

"Ah! that will be Sister Joseph who told you to come to the hospital," said Sister Ursula, but without much eagerness in her welcome. "Well, come in, then, you poor thing, and I will fetch her to you."

If Sister Ursula had let her kind heart have its way, she would have welcomed every pagan woman of the city to the peace of the convent, but poverty is an imperious mistress, and she knew that it was only with the greatest difficulty that food was found for the multitude of mouths, both young and old, that the institute already had to feed, and she dared not give the welcome she would have wished to this poor suffering body.

When Sister Joseph, called away from her multifarious duties, came upon the scene, no sign of recognition appeared either on her face or on that of the stranger. It was evident, without the disclaimer from each, that they had never met before.

"Not my lady, indeed!" came in indignant tones from the Chinese woman, whilst Sister Joseph was equally sure she had never seen the newcomer before.

"My lady very beautiful," was the next candid remark; and Sister Joseph's good-tempered reply, "Then, certainly, it wasn't I," made the past quite certain. But the present had to be considered, too, for, stranger though the woman was, or, rather, because she was a stranger in the city, Christian charity forbade her being turned away when evidently suffering from a mortal illness. It was not until a corner had been found for her in the hospital ward, that Sister Joseph learned that the beautiful lady had bidden Mrs. Weng to go to the convent, not for physical, but for spiritual aid.

The woman's story was rather incomprehensible, yet she clung to it in every detail.

Her home was in a village a day's journey from the city, and she and her husband and their four little girls — an unusual family in many parts of China, where girls' lives are too often not preserved — had been poor but happy, in a little hut amongst the rice fields where Mr. Weng labored. Then a wasting illness had come to the rice cultivator, and before the little girls were old enough either to earn or to be sold to husbands, death carried their father off, leaving behind, as his only legacy, his sickness.

Day after day Mrs. Weng had lain upon her bed, worn by ague and shaken by a racking cough. The little girls were too young to do more than give their mother a drink, and follow as best they could — and that was far from well — the directions that a neighbor had carelessly given.

"Then one day," went on Mrs. Weng, "as I lay so exhausted that I thought I was near to death, and my greatest trouble was that I had ever let my daughters live, a beautiful lady came into my poor house. She was very beautiful and very fine, and when she laid her lovely white hands upon my head, I felt no pain in it, and the draught she gave me to drink eased my cough as nothing else had eased it.

“ ‘ Go to Cheng-tsing-fu,’ she said. ‘ Go to my house there,’ and she gave me this address. ‘ Tell them you must be a Christian, because you want to go to Heaven, and that, when you are gone, for my sake they must care for your children, who must be Christians, too.’ ”

“ Does she speak the truth?” asked Sister Ursula, in her own tongue, to Sister Joseph.

“ It seems as though she does,” returned the latter. “ But I have never heard of any Christian lady in the district from which she comes.”

“ Was the lady of our race or of your own?” she asked Mrs. Weng.

“ She was not of mine,” was the reply. “ I could not tell her race, only that she was kind and beautiful, and her voice was sweet as music. Three times did she visit me, and after each visit, when I had drunk the draught she brought me, I felt new life come into my poor body, until there was strength in my limbs to do her bidding and come here. My children are weary after our long, long walk, and they sleep in the miserable house where we spent last night, whilst I came to the house of my beautiful lady,— and woe is me that she is not here, to harken and help me!”

The poor creature, despite the great improvement in her condition, of which she told, was too exhausted to rise from the couch where Sister Joseph had placed her, so another woman was sent, carrying Mrs. Weng’s shawl to show the children that she really came from their mother, to bring them to the convent, too.

They were bright, intelligent children, the eldest eight years old, the youngest four, and as a corner had been found in the hospital for Mrs. Weng, so were they, too, squeezed somehow into the already crowded school house. They were young enough to be baptized as infants, but the mother had to wait for adult baptism until she had received some instruction in the



THE BEAUTIFUL LADY

"She was kind and beautiful and her voice was sweet as music."
(Page 102)

faith, of which, as yet, she knew nothing except that her beautiful lady had told her to embrace it.

As before the lady's visits had checked her illness, so now Sister Joseph's care helped her so much that, after a week or two, she was able to leave her bed and go, for the first time in her life, into a Catholic church. She had accepted the Sister's teaching with childlike faith, and though it was Passiontide, and every symbol of Christianity was draped in purple, the poor woman seemed to feel the peace of the presence of Christ, and to be quite happy, as she said, just to sit and think of Him. Indeed, the only thing that marred her happiness was the fact that her beautiful lady, whom she had counted on finding at the convent, was not there.

On Holy Saturday a sudden hemorrhage warned everyone that the apparent improvement was not to last, and under the circumstances Mrs. Weng was allowed to receive the Sacrament of Baptism at the newly-blessed baptismal font. The following day she was so weak that it was only with help she could manage the few steps between the ward and the chapel, but she begged Sister Joseph to let her try, as she wished so much to take part in the ceremonies and rejoicings of which she heard the others speak.

The sun was streaming through the window over the altar as Mrs. Weng staggered into the gallery of the church, and it was only after she had sat down, and her eyes had become accustomed to the glare, that she made out the now unveiled statue, almost life-size, of Our Lady, which stood on a pedestal within the sanctuary. The inhabitants of the various departments — the school, the hospital, the home for the aged and cripples — of which Our Lady's convent consisted, were pouring into the church with more or less noise, so that the feeble exclamations of rapture that escaped the dying woman's lips were scarcely heard.

“My lady, my beautiful lady!” she cried, and she held out

her arms towards the statue. " See, I have done as you told me. I have come to your house, and I and my children are Christians. And happy! — it only needed this, your presence, to make me perfectly happy."

At first, she would not, could not, believe that the figure of the lady who had sent her to the convent, who had visited and tended her in her sickness, was only a statue; but when she learned it was a statue of the Mother of God, she was quite content. She knew that she was dying, and now that her children were safe in the care of the good Sisters, she was all eagerness to go where her beautiful lady would make all right for her with her Divine Son. Day after day until the end, the poor creature managed to creep to the chapel, and there at the last they found her, with her face turned to the statue of Our Lady and a smile still resting on her stiff dead lips.

The children wept with the noisy grief of childhood, when they understood that they would not see their mother again. But the kindness of their gentle guardians, and above all the assurance that they would one day meet their dear mother in Heaven, restored their happiness. No doubt, the prayers of good people for the foreign missions, which had won for Mrs. Weng the way into the true Church, won for her children the continued protection of Our Lady, who became for them indeed a mother to the motherless.

WOULD-BE CONVERTS

FATHER JOHN'S Chinese flock knew that he was always at home after Mass in the mornings, so that was the time they went to him for advice, or whatever else they wanted. One morning, however, it was a stranger who appeared before him as he ate his meager breakfast — a stranger who announced himself as Mr. Tchang, and his home as being several days' journey distant. With no beating about the bush Mr. Tchang told his need, and that was "to be made a Christian".

"But what do you know of the Christian religion?" questioned Father John. "There is no mission nearer to your home than this, which is at least three days' journey from you."

"I have traveled," replied Tchang, "and I have talked with people, and very good people, who have been converted to the Christian religion, and I wish to be converted, too, in order that I may save my soul."

It sounded very nice, very nice indeed; but Father John waited for something more definite before committing himself. There might be some ulterior motive hidden under this apparent desire for Christianity, and it was therefore a case for temporizing until the would-be convert had been tested.

"Well, Mr. Tchang," he said, "your desire to save your soul certainly does you credit, and I am delighted to hear of it, but a certain amount of knowledge of doctrine is necessary before the first steps can be taken towards making you a Christian."

"Of that I am aware," replied Tchang, "and it is for this reason I have come to you."

"But," the priest still objected, "how can you be instructed

when you live so far away? You would not, I presume, care to come and live here, near the mission?"

"Certainly I will come," replied Tchang. "It will give me the greatest pleasure to take up my residence in a Christian village and close to you, sir, and your mission."

This, indeed, was eagerness in an Oriental; but still Father John was not satisfied.

"Your desires do you credit," he still temporized. "The only thing is that, unfortunately, there are no houses to be had in the neighborhood at present; besides I am about to start on a round of visits amongst my outlying villages, and I shall be absent from home for two months."

Even this did not seem to damp Mr. Tchang's ardor, though it put an end to all immediate possibility of becoming a Christian. As Father John rode out of the village at one end, Mr. Tchang had to retrace his homeward way in the opposite direction, with his desire unfulfilled.

Two months later, when Father John returned home, he was not altogether surprised to find a new house erected close to the mission and inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. Tchang. This move certainly did look as though the would-be convert was in earnest. Father John began to hope that he had been too skeptical, and soon after his return he called on the new arrivals.

Then it was that he learned Mr. Tchang's real reason for wishing to become a Christian. Mrs. Tchang was not by any means a model wife: even amongst the pagans her conduct had given cause for scandal, and her husband could do nothing with her.

"And so," Mr. Tchang explained, "I said to her at last, 'Just come along with me and become a Christian. They are the people who know how to behave themselves and once you are one of them they'll see to it that you behave yourself, too."

Father John's first impulse, on hearing this, was to have the

Tchangs turned bag and baggage out of the village. On the whole it was a most respectable community and Father John was horrified to think that any member of his congregation should become a stumbling-block to others. But before he voiced his disapproval he learned from his catechist that not only Mr. Tchang himself, but the offending lady, had behaved in the most exemplary manner since their arrival.

The priest therefore contented himself for the moment with a word of warning, but he did not feel at all inclined to hurry the instruction of his new catechumens. In fact he put every obstacle in their way; and as the weeks and months passed, during which they learnt their catechism diligently, attended regularly the instructions, and never missed a morning at daily Mass, he kept his eyes and ears open for any failure on the part of the Tchangs to keep up to the high plane on which they had begun. But time passed and he heard nothing but what was in their favor.

Mr. Tchang was warned that he was being watched, and that if he were found to be acting in any undesirable way he would immediately be required to leave the neighborhood. The very fervor that was shown by both him and his wife only made Father John more skeptical as to their ulterior motives, and this suspicion was not lessened when he heard that Mrs. Tchang had been visiting the Orphanage of the Holy Childhood and that she had gotten into the habit of taking little presents to the children. Sometimes she would take fresh vegetables from the garden at which Mr. Tchang worked industriously; or some fresh eggs, or a piece of homemade cheese; and though Father John warned the Sisters to treat their visitor very coldly, the little gifts continued to come.

For a whole year this went on. The conduct of the Tchangs was so exemplary, from every point of view, that at last Father John had to relent, and he began really to feel hopeful that the sentiments of his would-be converts were genuine.

It had been a very hard season, and the destitution that the priest saw all about him was heartbreaking, especially as the poverty of the mission left him and the Sisters powerless to prevent the misery they deplored. The orphanage was filled to overflowing, yet each day brought other miserable and starved children to its doors. Numbers of Christian women in the neighborhood were employed as foster-mothers for the poor little waifs, whom they treated as their own, but one day a child was taken to the convent so diseased and in such a dreadful condition that no one could be found to undertake the charge of it.

Then it was that a brilliant idea struck Father John, and he led the way to the house of Mrs. Tchang.

“Now, Mrs. Tchang,” he said, as the woman came forward to meet him, “I know you are anxious to do penance for the past, so I have brought this child to you. I want you to take care of it. First you will need to wash it well; then I will give you ointment to put upon its sores, and medicine for it to take, and I shall depend upon your faithful care to save its life.”

“Very well, Father.” Mrs. Tchang held out her arms, without another word, and gathered the poor little outcast to her heart. Sickness and sores were overlooked. To this woman, who had been a sinner, it was just a little child that needed kindness and care; perhaps she even thought of it as a little soul that needed guarding from the danger of a death without Baptism.

Although even the best of Chinese foster-mothers are reluctant to adopt, or even to keep, a child if it is in danger of death, Mrs. Tchang never appeared to give this superstition a thought. Though it seemed, when she took in the foundling, that it had but a few hours to live, her devoted care dragged her nursing back from the valley of the shadow of death, and before many weeks had passed the child was as clean and



MARYKNOLL SISTERS IN CHINA RECEIVING
INFANTS

The late Father McShane, of Loting, assisted by Maryknoll Sisters, baptized nearly twenty-five hundred waifs during his short mission career of eight years.

bright as the best of the orphans in the House of the Holy Child.

Then it was Mrs. Tchang's turn to go with a request to Father John. Now that little Li was strong enough to be taken care of by a less devoted nurse, would the Sisters find him a home so that she might be free to take in other diseased children? She had time to dress their sores and coax them back to life, but once they were on the road to recovery, once they were beginning to repay her for her care and trouble, she would not wish to keep them lest they should be infected by the vermin or the diseases of the newcomers. As to payment, Mrs. Tchang expected no more than the foster-mothers of healthy children. Mr. Tchang was indefatigably industrious and what was enough for two would nearly suffice for a third little mouth.

When the would-be converts had been in their new home for nearly a year, their son came to live with them. The income of the little household was increased, and this enabled Mrs. Tchang to extend her benevolence until sometimes there were as many as three or four miserable little infants in her care. She never refused a case that was brought to her, and whatever the foundlings were like she never hesitated or showed the slightest disgust. If the babies needed her care by night she sat up with them as a matter of course; whilst by day no Sister of Charity could have been more devoted.

If in spite of her care the newly baptized Christian slipped away to a better world, she mourned it as a mother grieves for her own child. "I grew so fond of her," she used to cry. "It seems so hard to lose her just when she was beginning to look more comfortable and happy." Then with true Oriental logic she would brush away her tears. "Well, never mind," she would add, "there goes another angel to Paradise."

If on the contrary the child got well and strong, and she had to take it to the Sisters so as to make room for a new little invalid, she used to try and console herself for the part-

ing with the thought that the child would be brought up to be another — and with God's help a useful — member of the Church.

Father John at last relented, and in the face of so much charity and of such perseverance he promised that on an approaching feast the long desired Baptism should be given to both Mr. and Mrs. Tchang, after which they were to receive their First Communion.

Certainly the husband had been well advised when he brought his wife under the influence of the Christians, for since the day of her arrival at the mission her conduct had been exemplary and her charity really heroic. But before the appointed day arrived, an epidemic of typhoid fever was raging in the village, and Mrs. Tchang's charity was once more put to the test. Early and late she worked amongst the stricken villagers. Pagans and Christians alike owed their lives to her care, and in several cases where nursing was of no avail she persuaded the poor dying pagans to ask for Baptism.

One morning when she returned home after a night spent in nursing the stricken and dying, Mrs. Tchang found that her own son had fallen a victim to the fever. Her first thought, even though the boy was seriously ill, was not for his body, but for his soul. Father John, hastily summoned, saw at once that the case was a dangerous one. Even if the lad had not been in danger of death, Father John knew that he was well prepared for Baptism; his mother had seen to that. It was in the early hours of the morning that the priest had been sent for, and when he arrived he found a little altar arranged by the bedside and on it, besides the water for Baptism, were the necessary preparations, of which he had often spoken, for the administration of the Viaticum and of Extreme Unction.

"Father," said Mr. Tchang, greeting him on the threshold of the sick-room, "we are stricken parents to-day, but welcome be the will of God. We make only one request to you. If our

son is to be taken from us, we shall not murmur, but in God's name we implore one consolation, which is that we, my wife and I, may receive the waters of Baptism with our son, and with him the Bread of Life also."

And so it was that, not in the church, with such pomp as was possible in so poor a place, but in their own little house, at the bedside of their son, the would-be converts were, after their long and severe probation, received into the Church, and there too, with their newly baptized son, they received their First Communion. Father John left behind him a truly happy household, even though the Angel of Death was hovering around it.

But as Mrs. Tchang had kept death at bay for so many of her nurslings, so too did her tender care banish it from the bedside of her own son. Slowly, slowly, the boy crept back to health till he was well enough for his parents to resume the routine of life. But it was not quite the old routine. The would-be converts had nobly stood their long probation, and now, morning after morning, Father John gives to each of them the Bread of Life, so that Mr. Tchang can go, grateful and strengthened, to his labor in the fields, whilst his wife, strengthened too, returns to her daily life of work and loving Christian charity.

THE IMPOSSIBLE

YOU are using a word that is not to be found in the missioner's dictionary," said Reverend Mother, with a smile.

Sister Rose looked at the speaker in surprise. "I only said, dear Mother, that it is impossible to get a site in the city for a new convent, so we must make the best of the one we have." Her tone of voice asked which was the forbidden word.

"Impossible?" asked Reverend Mother gently. "To God all things are possible."

Sister Rose did not dream of arguing with her Superior, but as her hands busied themselves about the dispensary, her thoughts ran something like this:

"Here we are in the only part of the city in which Europeans can live. Heaven knows the smells, even here, are bad enough! We ought to be, and we are, grateful that this tiny bit of high ground is ours, and that the royalties who are our neighbors have spared us this corner; but there is no denying that we are terribly crowded and that a larger house and garden would enable us to double and treble our usefulness — that is, if the place were in this quarter. The rest of the city is really impossible — and so is outside the walls, both because we could not do the work there that we are doing here, and because we should be far from the church and out of touch with the Mission, which is for us both a moral and a physical defence."

"I wish," said the Reverend Mother placidly, "that we could extend our premises. This new high school for girls that Monseigneur asks us to undertake cannot fail to do an amount of good, but it takes so much space that I am afraid we shall

have to give up the ladies' retreats — except during the school holidays."

"And the babies," sighed Sister Rose, thinking of her special department — she was only helping Reverend Mother in the dispensary. "We are terribly crowded there, but it would be heart-breaking to have to refuse them when they are brought in. We had thirteen this morning, dear Mother, and some have already gone to Heaven. Not more than three will live, certainly."

"That means," said Reverend Mother smilingly, "that you are casting covetous eyes upon the old people's quarters. It can't be, Sister dear. Sister Baptista is probably thinking what a nice dormitory for old ladies your babies' playroom would make. Take care that I don't come and annex it for the hospital. We are just as much overcrowded as you are, and oh! such sad cases have to be refused."

"Poor things," murmured Sister Rose, though her thoughts still dwelt upon the sight of that morning, when she had been allowed to help Sister Basil to baptize thirteen dying girl babies, saved from death of neglect. Then suddenly the thought of Sister Imelda's charges, the little girls who had outgrown her nursery, came to her mind.

"Mother dear," she exclaimed, "would you think of setting Sister Imelda's children to praying for more space? They are preparing for their First Communion and they are as wise as — well, far wiser than I am," she ended with a laugh.

"That is an idea," replied Reverend Mother, and she nodded her head in satisfaction. "But we won't leave all the prayers to the children. Sister Vincent gave me the number in the house yesterday and, including the hospital, they were close on seven hundred. And how many babies did you say came in to-day?"

"Thirteen," repeated Sister Rose.

"Well, that makes a round number. Of course we can't count on all the patients nor on all the old people. Poor things,

the greater number of those we have just now are pagans, and most of your babies, Sister, are too small to pray. But we could muster nearly four hundred, I think. Then we must pray to — ” She paused a moment.

“ To our Chinese martyrs,” suggested Sister Rose.

“ That’s it,” agreed Reverend Mother. “ We’ll pray to our Chinese martyrs and get them to ask for more space for us to extend our works. And it’s not to be just a novena, but prayer every day until we get the ground.”

Sister Rose glanced through the window towards the royal gardens that surrounded the Sisters’ compound — but no, she would not again say, or even think, “ Impossible.” Like Reverend Mother she would say, “ With God, all things are possible.”

From this conversation was inaugurated a regular crusade of prayer. The old people, with little else to do, kept repeating many hundred times a day an ejaculatory prayer composed for the occasion: “ Glory to you, O holy Martyrs of China! Pray to God to send us more ground.”

Those of the babies who could speak at all lisped a similar petition, and the girls of the high school, the cripples, and other women and girls who worked at various industries in the house, added to their prayers small mortifications, performed daily and regularly, counted and offered for the same intention.

In this, no doubt, the Sisters set them an example, and though in all probability many besides Sister Rose had used the forbidden word in thought if not in speech, the crusade of prayer went on. With the placid certainty of the Chinese, the old people talked of the new rooms they soon would occupy, and of the advantage of having the children at less close quarters.

The prayers for the desired extension were sandwiched in by the old people between scraps of gossip, gleaned from those who were still able to go in and out. On one day the great



“They lived their quarters, cramped and crowded though they were : : and how, *oh!* how, could they ever more their family of seven hundred dependents?” (Page 117)

topic of conversation was the marriage of one of the princes, the son of a particularly strong-minded royal lady who, if rumor spoke correctly, would certainly not agree to share her authority with a daughter-in-law, and discussions as to where she would elect to live helped to while away many a tedious hour. That there was any connection between the gossip and the prayers never occurred to the minds of anyone, but these two extraordinarily different things were being woven together in the plans of Heaven. The result of the weaving became known in the convent in a form that no one at first recognized.

One morning a large official envelope was delivered to the Reverend Mother and the contents of it caused consternation to the entire Mission. Reduced to common parlance, the letter made known the fact that the place where the Christians had been allowed to erect their buildings was required for the housing of the prince's mother, who was about to set up an establishment of her own and desired to be near her son.

The congregation was under the protection of the French Government, so that such an important change could not be carried out without the intervention of the Consul, to whom the Sisters applied in all their difficulties. Those of the establishment who knew what was threatening may possibly have faltered in their intercessions for "more ground," but, ignorant of the earthquake that seemed about to shake their world to its foundations, the greater number of those engaged in the attack of prayer against the impossible went calmly on their way. Perhaps Reverend Mother was now tempted, herself, to use the forbidden word, though in a sense different to that in which Sister Rose had used it. Surely it was "impossible" that God would allow them to be turned out of their convent and obliged to abandon all their works, the fruits of so much labor.

The Chinese families living on either side of the Mission had received notices similar to that received by the Reverend Mother, but in their cases a sum was enclosed in each envelope,

sufficient to indemnify them for any loss occasioned by removal from the sites desired by the authorities. Had it not been that the convent was under French protection, the fate of the Sisters might not have differed from that of their neighbors. Had the authorities not been restrained by political motives, the Sisters might have been set adrift and obliged to seek a refuge in some other city or even to abandon their huge family of dependents and to return to Europe.

The community learned with amazement, dismay, or incredulity — as the case might be — of the prospect before them, and even Sister Rose joined in the chorus that it was impossible, *impossible*, that the Mission, with its cathedral, its hospital, its schools, its orphanage, its workrooms and refuges for crippled and old people, its convent and the residence of Monseigneur, should be confiscated. And, thanks to the protec-
torate of France, it *was* impossible.

The Consul understood those with whom he had to deal, and the somewhat involved answer, wrapped as it was in flow-
ery compliments, that he sent for the Reverend Mother, con-
tained a refusal as definite as he dared make it. The ground had
been conceded to France for the use of the Mission, he claimed,
and it could not be given up. When this answer had been des-
patched, there was nothing further to do but pray. All through
the day, and even in the night, when the old and the sick were
unable to sleep, the same cry was sent up to heaven: “ Glory be
to you, O blessed Martyrs of China! Obtain from God that
we may get more ground.”

The reply to the Consul’s letter was an offer to give to the Bishop, in exchange for the Mission site, a large tract of land in the highest and best part of the city. Moreover, a sum of money sufficient to cover in large part the cost of the erection of new buildings, was promised. The only condition was that the present site should be evacuated by a certain day. The offer was a most generous one — but it filled the good Sisters’ hearts with

dismay. They loved their quarters, cramped and crowded though they were. They loved the church, which would now have to be destroyed. And how, oh! how, could they ever move their family of seven hundred dependents?

The Chinese authorities sent an architect to study the old mission settlement, and under the direction of Monseigneur and his advisers he drew out a plan of what the new settlement would be: a crêche for seven hundred babies; class rooms, dormitories and playgrounds for the same number of infants as they grew too old for the nursery; workrooms for them when they came to working age; a roomy home for the old people; a hospital with modern equipment, and a home for the patients who proved incurable; a building suitable for the projected high school; and lastly, the convent itself, with a wing set apart for ladies' retreats. All these were designed, and Monseigneur and the Consul graciously agreed to fourteen hundred workmen being put to their erection.

One thing they did not agree to, and that was the continuance of a pagoda facing the site reserved for the new church: a pagoda which belonged to the royal family and which was a center of pilgrimage, drawing pagans, many of whom were fanatics, from all parts to visit it. Very calmly the Consul declared that the pagoda must be handed over to him, to be turned into a Christian church. If this were done, he undertook to evacuate the present convent fully six months sooner than had at first been arranged. And — marvel upon marvel — the authorities agreed to his demand without a demur.

News of the impending changes spread like wildfire. Excitement and consternation seemed to be about equally divided. Such an upheaval! Such an earthquake! Each Sister thought of the difficulties of moving her special charges — and possibly in all the clamor and excitement, the prayers to the Martyrs of China were forgotten.

Everything had been signed, sealed and solemnly agreed to,

before the Sisters themselves were able to visit the place that was to be their new home. It was the pleasant season of the year and the tract of land that now belonged to the Mission was wearing its most attractive garb. It was, as has been said, a part of the royal demesne, and, besides all the buildings in process of erection, there would be sunny enclosures for the old people to sit in, tree-shaded grass on which the children could play, and a fine extent of arable land on which to grow the vegetables that formed the staple diet of all.

Reverend Mother and Sister Rose, when they stood looking down on their new domain, though still dismayed by the ever nearing upheaval, were full of eager curiosity as to what the new Mission would be like. And as the comfort, and above all the size, of their new abode became evident to Sister Rose she stood in speechless amazement at her superior's side. Then, all at once a light broke in upon her.

"More space!" — she looked over the immense span that was now theirs — "dear Mother, we have been asking for more space and" — pointing to the vast stretch of ground that spread away before them — "it's — it's the Impossible!" she stammered.

FATHER EMMANUEL'S VOCATION

THE ceremonies of ordination, which had begun at an early hour, were over, and before mid-day the students, who were now priests of God forever, had returned to the seminary. In the parlors their friends and relatives were gathering round them, each one eager to receive a blessing from the young hands, so lately consecrated. There was one among them who was welcomed by only a single relative. Neither Emmanuel Palmeau's father nor his mother had been able to attend his ordination, but his uncle Antoine brought the news that he was eagerly awaited at home, and that the old Curé had arranged for him to say his first Mass at midnight on Christmas Eve in the old chapel on the sandhills, where he had made his First Communion and where the light to see his vocation had first been given to him.

Antoine Palmeau was stamped unmistakably by his calling. He was a seaman from head to foot, and it was his sloop which was to take the newly ordained priest home in time to say his First Mass on Christmas Eve. Early in the afternoon they embarked, themselves and two sailors, and the skipper counted on getting home before dark, unless indeed the wind that was blowing briskly in their favor burst too soon into the gale that was brewing among the lowering clouds of the winter sky.

At first the little boat scudded along merrily, and the single passenger stood at the railings looking out over the waters to the city they were leaving far behind. The towers of the Cathedral stood up over the other buildings, and the young man's mind went back to the scene of the morning, the solemnity of which was still fresh upon him. What work had God in store for him? Would his home be in the city, with his daily

Mass said in the Cathedral? or would it be in some country chapel, where, quietly and uneventfully, the days would pass until he, in his turn, should become a parish priest himself? Wherever his bishop sent him, he would find work to do for God, and he prayed in his heart that wherever he should be he might prove a worthy servant of the Master, Who in giving him a vocation to the priesthood had given him such a precious thing.

The young priest was used, since childhood, to the sea and he was disquieted by the coming storm only when he began to fear that the boat would not be able to reach the port before midnight. The white crests of the waves were breaking all around him, and while the sailors worked, furling the sail which was now becoming a danger to them, his uncle bade him go below before the little deck was entirely swept by the rising waters.

It was very dark in the single cabin, and the boat was rolling so that Emmanuel was obliged to creep into one of the deep bunks and lie there, listening to the storm now roaring about them, and praying that God would watch over them and guide them into safety.

“O my God,” he prayed, “You are Lord of the sea as well as of heaven and earth. You can bring us in safety to land. Our lives are Yours to do with as You please. Have You put me in the midst of this storm to show me that my priestly life will be surrounded by the storm and stress of sin and temptation? But I do not fear bodily or spiritual dangers for myself, for You are with me now and always. I am Your priest and so long as I call on You to help, You cannot forsake me.”

“Emmanuel!” came a voice, barely audible through the raging of the storm. “Emmanuel! we can do no more. We are lost unless God Himself saves us. Pray, you!”

Antoine Palmeau was not a man to give up hope until things were really desperate. As he spoke, the mainmast, which had

SMILING SPIRITUAL SONS OF THE MISSION FATHER

“Forty years of work in China, of which the world knew little; but how many thousands of souls helped to the knowledge of God!” (Page 122)



been groaning and creaking almost like a creature in agony, snapped off and fell on the deck with such a thud that the little sloop went down, down, and the green waters dashed over her as though to blot her out of existence forever. The men on the deck, lashed to their places, were drenched and torn by the angry waters, and below in the cabin the solitary occupant thought that indeed his last hour had come. Then once again the gallant little vessel righted herself, and the flash of the lighthouse showed that they were not so far, after all, from the safety of the bay, in which their haven lay.

"My God," cried the young priest. "Is this to be the end of my priestly life? Am I never to have the privilege of exercising the powers that I received from You only this morning in ordination? Am I not worthy to work as the humblest laborer in Your vineyard? O Savior of mankind, if there is no work for me to do for You in France, think of the countries where priests are needed so sorely. Take me now if it is Your Will, but if my unworthiness is not too great, spare me to work for You among those who have never even heard Your name."

The thought of volunteering for the foreign missions had never come before to Emmanuel Palmeau. He had looked forward to exercising his priestly functions in some quiet French parish near to his own people, with maybe his mother or sister to keep his house for him. But now, in the darkness and clamor of the storm, a wish to make God known and loved in that part of the vineyard where the harvest was ready but the laborers few, sprang into being in his heart. It was not life for its own sake that he asked for himself, — *that* he asked for his uncle and the sailors, — but for himself he asked only for time to serve God more nearly, to love Him more dearly, than he had done before. *Fiat voluntas tua*, he prayed, — that God's will might be done, whether it was to take him now, a priest who never had celebrated Mass, or to leave him to work in the exile of the mission fields. And God, seeing that the

thought He had put into the heart of this young priest was so generously met, answered his prayer and spared his life.

Once in the shelter of the great bay, the wind which outside had been their enemy, came to their help, and the sloop made the haven just as the bells of the chapel on the sandhills were ringing out for midnight Mass.

They were all gathered on the little wooden pier to welcome him, — father, mother, brothers and sisters, little scarcely known nephews and nieces, and old friends who remembered his own childish days. But Emmanuel hardly saw them all. His mother went down on her knees to ask his blessing, but, throwing his arms about her, he bade her wait till his first Mass should be said.

Never in the history of that sailor's chapel had quite such a scene as this been witnessed before: the midnight hour — the young priest, saved almost miraculously from drowning, saying his first Mass — with the old Curé who had baptized him, as his server.

Forty years of work in China, work of which the world knew little; but how many thousands of souls helped to the knowledge of God and ministered to in all those years! No one on earth can judge truly of such things. But at Christmas time, when Père Emmanuel Palmeau passed to his reward, those of his brother missionaries who knew the story of his call to the foreign missions, affirmed with sure and certain hope that the Master, Who had spared his life many years before, would greet him, now that death had really come, with the welcome words, “Well done!”

THE WOMAN OF THE BARGE

IT was called a boat, and certainly it floated on the water; but if it ever had any powers of navigation, it had lost them years ago, and now was just a ruin, a cabin lying at anchor in a bend of the river. And dirty — ! None of the river boats looked particularly dainty; but this one was distinguishable for its uncleanliness, even amongst its neighbors.

Sister Gertrude had noticed the boat as she and her companion passed along the riverside, in quest of tiny deserted girls, many of whom were rescued by the nuns, or by people employed by them, and taken to St. Joseph's Home, where, if their poor little bodies were beyond human power to cure, at least their little souls were cleansed with the waters of Baptism before flying back to Heaven. In the tumbled-down, mat-thatched cabin of the old boat, the Sisters saw a shriveled and, it must be admitted, very hideous old crone, draped in rags, who sat in the hole that played the part of doorway to her abode, and with hands outstretched, begged from the passers-by.

When, week after week, they passed that way, the Sisters saw the same old woman, framed in the same old rags, unchanged except that her skinny hands became more claw-like and her face, like crinkled yellow parchment, more seamed. They began to wonder whether the poor old creature was incapable of movement, and at last they spoke to her. Sister Gertrude's long residence in China had made her familiar with many dialects, and she found, on addressing the woman of the barge, that she was quite able to make herself understood, and to understand in return the story that the old woman had to tell. And a sad, pathetic story it was.

Years ago, before the Boxer rising, Len-la had lived in comparative comfort with her husband and three sons on a piece of land which their untiring industry made sufficient to supply their needs. The old woman herself had always been religious-minded, but as her people were ignorant of all true religion, her piety had taken the form of superstitious fear of the hideous idol, who was looked upon as the patron deity of the place.

When the Boxer rising had come, the spirit of unrest had seized upon Len-la's sons, and they had gone, one after the other, to join the fighters. Gone, never to return, and what was harder still for the old mother — now childless, for her daughters had all been destroyed in infancy — her sons were gone without any of the formalities which she imagined would have appeased the gods on their behalf. The poor woman's religion was founded, not like Christianity, on love, but simply on fear, and her whole mind and reason were paralyzed at the thought that death had separated her sons from her forever. Her husband, apparently, counted for little. In fact, it sounded as though his death had been a relief, because it left her free to dispose of their piece of ground as she wished, or rather, as the worshippers of the local idol suggested would best appease her god of Fear.

If Len-la was willing so to sacrifice herself as to make a vow to live in sight of the shrine for the rest of her life, and to humble herself to depend for her daily bread upon the charity of passers-by, the guardians of the shrine promised to cultivate her rice fields for the benefit of the idol, and they assured her that in return the happiness of her sons after death would be secured. There was no dwelling-house within sight of the shrine, so the cabin of the old barge was suggested as a suitable place for the old woman to spend the rest of her life. And Sister Gertrude discovered that for years Len-la had never left the cabin, no larger than a cupboard, where they

saw her; hence the name by which she was known: "The Woman of the Barge."

As the Sisters went on their way after hearing this story, almost incredible to those who do not realize the depths to which superstitious fear can reduce a pagan, Sister Gertrude expressed her opinion decidedly to her companion.

"This," she said, "is a case for the Holy Souls!" Seeing the question in Sister Marie's face, she explained further:

"It is monstrous that this unfortunate woman should sacrifice her life to the cupidity of pagans, who so work upon her superstitious fears as to make a prisoner of herself, whilst they grow rich upon the proceeds of what, twenty years ago, was her rice field. Do you realize, Sister Marie, that the ground belonging to this old woman is now, and for years has been, a part of the town, for which, no doubt, a good price has been paid to those in whose care she left it? Well, it seems to me that the only way to open the poor old thing's eyes, and so free her from her voluntary prison, is to teach her the doctrine of Purgatory, and the Infinite Mercy of God."

This was one of those cases where the workers on the missions would have been helpless without the well-wishers who stay at home. No conversion can be wrought without prayer and sacrifice, and when Sister Gertrude returned to the convent she went straight to the chapel and reminded Our Lord of all the prayers offered up to Him at home for the missions.

"Dear Lord," she prayed, "have pity upon this poor soul. Out here we have so little time for prayer, but remember all the souls in America and in Europe who pray for the success of the missions. Please, dear Lord, remember that, without knowing her, they have prayed and are praying to You for her."

After that she had no doubt but that Our Lord would, in His own good time, give the gift of faith to the "Woman of the Barge." Yet, each positive step taken concerning this con-

version could only be a very little one. The Sisters' journeys often took them along the river, and even when the barge did not lie exactly in their path, they began to go out of their way so as to visit Len-la, and whilst offering her some small gift from their store they won her confidence by the genuine interest they took in all that concerned her.

On the occasion of their first visit it had seemed as though the old woman's faculties were almost numbed by the death-in-life that she was leading, but by degrees she seemed really to welcome what must have been a not unpleasant break in the monotony of her day. Very gradually the Sisters began to express their views on the death of the old lady's sons. They told of the mercy of the only True God, and of how Len-la could pray for the souls of all who had passed from this world.

Sometimes the old lady's questions were not easy to answer: What was Purgatory like? Would each one have a larger space in it than the cabin of the barge? Would the True God hear the prayer of an old woman, who sat year in and year out upon the waters of a Chinese river? One question in particular gave a welcome opening to the Sisters: "Why need Len-la sit year in and year out in so uncomfortable and unsavory a spot?" To please the idol! to please a hideous figure in clay, when, if she went to the chapel of St. Joseph's, she could sit as long as ever she wished in the presence of the living King of kings, in Whose power it was to make her happy for all eternity. After that, each day, came questions about the King of kings.

There was no doubt but that Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was drawing the poor soul to Him. When the inquiry came as to how Len-la could live if she were no longer a devotee of the idol, Sister Gertrude knew that the stay-at-homes' prayers had won another victory. Low as the funds were for providing necessities for the inmates of St. Joseph's Refuge,



LENLA'S IDOL

“The hideous idol who was looked upon as the patron deity of the place.” (Page 124)

the answer to Len-la's inquiry could not be anything but an invitation to the poor old captive to exchange the shelter of her barge for the shelter of St. Joseph's Home.

The keepers of the idol's shrine, knowing the unfair advantage that had been taken of the woman's credulity, would certainly have risen and prevented her release had they learned of it in time. Therefore, Sister Gertrude arranged that two trusty Christian men should go after dark with a rickshaw, and carry off the "Woman of the Barge," leaving her late dwelling apparently as usual, so that the flight of the inmate might remain unnoticed for several days. By that time, soap and water, a vigorous application of brush, comb, and scissors, and the covering of a hood on the purified head, would have made Len-la almost indistinguishable from the other old inmates of St. Joseph's Home.

But very little of Len-la's time was spent with her new companions. Her voluntary immobility for so many years had taken the power of movement away from the poor old limbs, just as the habit of years had deprived her of the power of eating more than the tiniest modicum of food. All she asked was to be carried from her bed to the chapel. The stay-at-homes' prayers had been nobly answered, for the Faith in its fulness was given by Almighty God to this poor soul. As for years she had sat all day contemplating the river, the idol, the passers-by, now all day she sat contemplating the Tabernacle wherein dwelt the Son of God. After a long wait the "Woman of the Barge" had found that for which her soul had always longed, the true God to worship.

When those in attendance on the idol realized that no claim was being made on them for their stewardship of Len-la's old home, they gave no sign even of being aware that their "Woman of the Barge" had disappeared. Probably they knew or guessed that the Catholic Sisters had come to the rescue of yet another bit of miserable humanity, but so long as

their own acts and those of their predecessors were not called into account they did not care.

And at St. Joseph's, for the few remaining years of her life, Len-la rejoiced in many names. Officially, of course, she was called by that of her husband, but everyone knew who was meant by the "Woman of the Barge," or the "Holy Souls' Friend" — in recognition of all the prayers she said for them — or even, as Sister Gertrude called her, the "Stay-at-Homes' Convert."

TERENCE MULDOON'S HARVEST

BLUE-CLAD Chinese were at work on a scaffolding that had been erected against the hospital wall at Shanghai, and Sister Helene, catching sight of one of them as she passed the window of the ward, stood gazing at him.

"What is it, Sister?" asked the patient in the nearest bed, amazed at the unwonted sight of Sister Helene actually doing nothing for a minute. "What ails you at all?"

"'Tis that poor Johnny Chinaman," replied the Sister. "Ah, you soldiers! you are well off," she went on with a smile. "You fall sick, you have an accident, and here is the hospital ready and waiting for you. But poor Johnny — no one cares for him."

"Well, he's a dirty lot, at best, Sister," said the Irishman. "Even his own do precious little for him."

"Oh! There you have it," cried Sister Helene, in her quaint broken English. "No one cares for poor Johnny excepting the good God Who made him."

"I think most people in this benighted place forget they have souls themselves, much less that Johnny has one," returned Terence Muldoon.

"But not you, my friend," said Sister Helene, softly. "Ah, you Irish! I think it is the persecution of many centuries that makes you so faithful. May it please God that persecution in my dear France may have the same result."

After her own beloved countrymen, none of her patients were so near to her heart as the Irishmen belonging to the regiment quartered in Shanghai, or the young men of the same race who had found their way into the British mercantile

houses in the Chinese port or into the Royal Navy or Merchant Service ships that were stationed or stopped there.

Flourishing as Shanghai was from the point of view of trade, many decades ago, it was a hotbed of disease — typhoid fever, small-pox, cholera. There seemed always to be one or other raging in the port, and, in addition, there were frequent accidents, laying low both soldiers and sailors of the Allied nations. To stem the death-rate from all these causes, the united authorities — French, American, and British — decided, in the year 1862, to build a hospital for sick men of all white nations. A fine building, standing well above the fetid air of the town, was given in charge of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. The Superioress, Sister Helene, set to work obediently at the task that was laid upon her. And, God knows, there was work for souls to be done amongst the white patients who came under her care. But her heart yearned towards the pagan Chinese for whose sake she had become an exile from France. Once she made a tentative suggestion that an empty bed might be put at the disposal of a native patient. This, however, was so hastily and so peremptorily vetoed by the authorities that she never ventured to suggest it to the Board again.

"Will you do something?" she now asked, turning from the window and bending over Terence Muldoon's bed. "You have your Rosary beads there. You Irish have them always. Well, say them for my intention. Ask the Mother of God to get my Chinese patients for me."

And Terence Muldoon, lying in the weakness of a typhoid convalescence, often slipped the beads through his fingers, praying the prayers that Sister Helene had requested.

Less than a week after, when he was able to sit up for several hours a day and his thoughts were upon leaving the comfort of the hospital for the disgusting slums of the town below, where the British barracks stood, his prayers were answered in

a totally unexpected way. The building that he had watched from his bed, that Sister Helene had stood looking at that day she had asked his prayers, was drawing near completion. Suddenly, as he watched, a part of the scaffolding gave way and the Chinese workman whom they had seen — or, if not he, another too like him for European eyes to discern the difference — fell to the ground, breaking a leg.

For an accident on their own premises the Board had to make an exception even to their hard and fast rule, and Sister Helene had the desire of her heart, the nursing of a pagan native. More than that, the man was so much struck by the religion which made gently nurtured European ladies devote themselves, for no reward beyond the love of God, not only to their own sick countrymen, but to him, a Chinese, that, before his broken leg was mended, he had asked to be instructed in Christianity.

When Sister Helene's patients went back to their work or their naval or military duties in Shanghai, she always impressed upon them that they would be welcome at any time to visit the hospital, and the Catholics — a few of her own countrymen, and the rest Irishmen in either British or American employ — were invited to come on Sundays or feast days to Mass or Benediction in the Sisters' chapel. Terence Muldoon was amongst the number who accepted this invitation. One day, some months after, he was amazed to learn from Sister Helene that, as a result of his prayers — so she put it to him — the Chinese mason had broken his leg, and had been admitted by a great concession to the hospital, and in consequence of what he saw and learned there, he and all his family had been received into the Catholic Church.

"And now, Mr. Muldoon," said Sister Helene, "your good prayers have reaped so fine a harvest that I beg of you to pray again. If only we had the wherewith to build an annex to the hospital, a very small addition to our present staff could, in

this annex, care for Chinese patients, who would in no way interfere with the Europeans and Americans on this side. And think, Mr. Muldoon, think — not of their poor suffering yellow bodies, if that does not touch you, but of their souls — miserable, benighted, steeped in paganism — which, with God's help, we could lead to truth and happiness."

Terence Muldoon did as he was bidden, and prayed again for the intentions of Sister Helene. But, remembering that God helps those who help themselves, he did more than pray. Amongst his fellow-countrymen in the barracks he made a collection to help Sister Helene to build her annex. The total of the collection was somewhere about five pounds according to English money, but that was no inconsiderable sum for a handful of Irish soldiers to give in charity out of their pay. Perhaps the self-elected collector was rather disappointed that Sister Helene said so little, when he and one or two others whom he had succeeded in interesting in his quest presented the money. The truth was that Sister Helene could not speak just then. Later she made up for it.

Her dear, generous, true-hearted, Catholic Irish had given her wherewith to start the building of an annex for poor suffering Chinese. How could her own countrymen forbear adding to this wherewith? Merchants, soldiers, sailors, all were shamed into giving, because of the lead of Terence Muldoon. And, following the French, came the Americans and even the English inhabitants, who, as a rule, did not naturally contribute to Catholic charities. No one had thought of the idea before, but now that it was mooted there was scarcely a foreigner in Shanghai who did not come forward eagerly with a donation for Sr. Helene's hospital, for she was loved and honored by all. And so the building, which was to be the ante-chamber to heaven for many souls, came into being.

The Board made no demur to any institution in which the yellow patients were kept absolutely separate from the whites.



A SISTER OF CHARITY WITH HER CHINESE PATIENTS

“The building which was to be the ante-chamber to heaven for many souls —” (Page 132)

Nor did they, nor could they, object to the number of those native patients who, on leaving the hospital, joined the catechumenate at the Catholic church.

No sooner was the hospital in full working order, than the two who, under God, had been the means of its foundation, were called from Shanghai. Sister Helene was needed for a post at Peking, and her place was taken by another Sister of Charity. Terence Muldoon was moved with his regiment to a different station. But whatever his moves were on earth, when the time came for his last move he had before him, to his credit, a magnificent harvest of Chinese souls, the fruit of the generous response of himself and his companions to the suggestion of Sister Helene.

THE SACRED HEART AT TSING

THE Superior of the seminary looked grave, and so, too, did the Chinese seminarian who faced him. There was good reason for gravity, in the importance of the subject under discussion. The Superior had made a request, and if the seminarian agreed to it, it would mean the postponing of his ordination for several months. On the other hand, his acceptance would open to the young man the mission field, which he had expected to enter only as a priest.

There was in the vicariate a village of some forty houses — three hundred souls, in all — which was a tiny oasis of Christianity in the vast desert of paganism. This village, by name Tsing-tsao-ho, had a little straw-roofed chapel, but it had been pastorless since the recall of so many French missionaries at the beginning of the World War. Every one of the three hundred members of the village had been baptized, but the practice of the Faith had suffered from five years of unavoidable neglect. The Vicar Apostolic, having no priests to send, had at last applied to the seminary for the loan of a student who could instruct the little flock and prepare them once again for the reception of the sacraments. Later a priest could be sent for a brief visit, to hear confessions, say the Easter Mass, and give Paschal Communions.

So much, the seminarian, Mr. Lo, heard about the village of Tsing, and he decided that the request was one that could not be disregarded. He agreed to set out at once and to give a lay mission of six months' duration.

Before the end of the first week, the young apostle began to look upon his task as almost hopeless. He found that not only had the fervor of the villagers cooled because of their long

deprivation of the sacraments, but that there were two serious obstacles standing in the way of their return to the practice of their religion. In the first place, the men of the village were absolute slaves to the demon of gambling, not only spending the greater part of their time in play, but often staking all their belongings on the throw of the dice and thus bringing their homes and their families to ruin. And secondly, there was a great family feud, with ramifications, that left hardly a house in the village untouched.

Mr. Lo was fervent and zealous, but he was also young and inexperienced, and he had not the power of the priesthood to uphold him. It was only natural that, soon after he had grasped the situation, he felt discouraged and downhearted. Making his way to the chapel, in which Mass had not been said for so long, he knelt, sadly enough, before the empty tabernacle. His prayers for help and guidance were heartfelt. Raising his eyes to the altar, which despite the absence of the priest had been kept dusted and garnished, he suddenly felt consoled, for above it stood a statue of the Sacred Heart, and Mr. Lo felt an inward assurance that his efforts to keep the Faith alive in that little outpost of the Church would not be in vain.

But at his very first attempt to gather the people together for public prayers, he ran against one of the stumbling blocks. The first household invited to attend the evening service, was quite willing to do so, if — their next-door neighbors received no invitation to be present. And the second and the third families also made no secret of their determination not to worship in a church that was open to their enemies.

“ And yet,” said the father of one household to the young catechist, “ if I could only be sure that I should meet none of those with whom I am at enmity, I would gladly offer my homage to Almighty God, Who allows the image of His Son to dwell amongst us.”

In a flash Lo saw a way out of this difficulty. The words of

the Gospel came to him, "First go and be reconciled to thy brother, then coming, offer thy gifts."

As the key of the chapel was now in Mr. Lo's possession, he was able to assure this householder that if he and his family would come and pray at a certain hour, he might be certain that no one else would be allowed to enter. The household was a large one, and the head of it would bring with him his sons and their wives and children, all of whom naturally sided with the father in the public quarrel. Thus there would be quite a little congregation to listen to the speaker.

The subject chosen for the first meeting was — the forgiveness of injuries? No, though the "Our Father" was repeated several times during the service; it was the love of God. The seminarian, who was giving up his life for that love, found that his lips moved eloquently on so beautiful a theme, and it seemed as though these Christians, who for two generations had had this statue of the Heart of Divine Love amongst them, had never before realized its significance. When they parted that night, after listening to Mr. Lo's instruction, each one carried home a small colored picture, a replica of the statue which, as they had just been reminded, represented the Son of God, Who forgives all repentant sinners and Who died for the salvation of mankind.

With gratitude to Heaven in his heart, Mr. Lo repeated this same little ceremony for each of the households of the other two sections of the community. All were willing to repeat the petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," and yet all carried enmity and hatred in their hearts. But grace was working, even in these perverse and ignorant souls, and at length all but the three heads of sections were reconciled, and in each home the picture of the Sacred Heart was hung in a place of honor.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart had worked at Tsing such marvels as it works wherever it is truly practiced. Mr. Lo de-

terminated to carry it to the degree so warmly recommended by the Holy Father, and to have the forty homes of Tsing formally consecrated to the Sacred Heart.

Daily he gave instructions from the little book, "The Reign of the Sacred Heart," which had been translated into the dialect of the district, and many of his hearers asked for copies of the book to take home with them. Gradually the rule, so insisted upon at first, of no member of an enemy camp being present at the devotions of any one group, began to be disregarded, and there was a friendly mingling. Only the three heads of the groups remained implacable. Yet, curious to relate, they, too, asked to be allowed to consecrate their homes to the Sacred Heart, and one was among those who journeyed to the distant Mission to ask Father d'Herbigny to come and perform the ceremony of consecration at Tsing.

In all the homes, for some weeks before the priest was to visit them, the picture of the Sacred Heart had been hung. Mr. Lo had confidence in Our Lord's promise that He will give peace to those homes where His image is honored, and so he made a final appeal to the great three on the very day that Father d'Herbigny was due.

"Can you ask Our Lord to accept the care of your home," he asked of each in turn, "if in that home you are nourishing hatred and ill-will?"

And with a final quotation of Our Lord's own words as to being reconciled to your brother before offering your gifts, he prevailed upon them to go and pray before the statue in the church, for light to see what Our Lord wished them to do.

Outside, in the market place of the village, the people were gathered together waiting to welcome the priest who for so long had been unable to visit them. Inside the little church three implacable enemies knelt before the statue of the God of Love. Then, to the amazement of all, the three men came out, and throwing themselves upon their knees before Mr. Lo,

they asked him, with tears in their eyes, to bear witness to their repentance and to the pardon they craved from each other.

The great feud of Tsing was at an end.

An hour later the priest arrived. All that evening, far into the night, and during most of the next day, he was busy hearing confessions. As soon as the Blessed Sacrament had been returned to the tabernacle, which had been without its Sacred Guest for so long, a great number of Christians made the Holy Hour of Adoration that Mr. Lo had told them about. On the following morning the whole population of the village received Holy Communion before having the ceremony of enthronement performed in each of their homes.

Mr. Lo had stressed his explanation of the twelfth promise of the Sacred Heart, and as a result, before Father d'Herbigny departed, a universal appeal was made to him to return to the village for the First Friday of nine consecutive months. That was in February, and from then until the following October, the busy missioner made the long, tedious journey monthly to Tsing. And every month, although their seminarian-apostle had returned to the seminary to prepare for his ordination, nearly three hundred Christians received Holy Communion monthly, earning for themselves, we may safely hope, the reward that Our Lord has promised.

As was to be expected, the gamblers, on returning to the practice of their religion, were obliged to restrain their love of play within reasonable bounds. As a result, the entire village, rejuvenated and reunited, is daily becoming more worthy to welcome Our Lord when he comes, with a resident priest, to take up his abode among the homes of Tsing.



A CHINESE BISHOP

Right Reverend Simon Tsu, S.J., one of the six Chinese bishops consecrated in Rome in October, 1926.

MAY DEVOTIONS

THE life of a priest on the foreign missions is a hard one, and Father Leo had known this when he went to China. He had looked forward gladly to the bodily privations, to the loneliness, to the weariness and discomforts, for he had thought these would be only the framework of the picture of his life. He had felt that he could, with God's help, bear everything, if only his labors and trials were crowned with success.

On one point only he had deceived himself. He was full of zeal, and he had imagined himself preaching to crowds eager to hear the truth, wearing himself out in giving instructions and administering the Sacraments. In this dream of the life that was to be, his services had been called upon from every side. He had heard of the harvest awaiting the laborers in the vineyard of the Lord, of the souls that were deprived of the consolations of religion because of the scarcity of priests, and the days and weeks that he spent upon his journey to the East had seemed to him endless, so eager was he to begin his work.

Then, when he landed in China, he had gone into the country to the district to which he was appointed, and the priest there, with whom he was to work until he learned the Chinese language, had told him — what indeed he saw for himself — that the need for priests had not been exaggerated at home, nor had the fervor of the Chinese converts been spoken of too highly.

It was later, when he was ready to take charge of a district of his own, that his disappointments had begun. The people in this new parish of his were good, if not deeply fervent, but the pagans were indifferent. They were not opposed to him and his teaching; they did not offer him persecution: but they

were not interested; they simply ignored him and cared nothing for his religion.

So his dreams of spreading the Faith dwindled down, and by degrees he began to lose heart even over the daily routine of duties. Perhaps at this time he may have wondered if, after all, he had not mistaken his vocation in choosing to be a missioner. Did the reason of his failure to attract the pagans to the truth lie in the fact that God had really intended him to work in his own country? As he grew more and more disheartened, so did his people become less fervent. He visited his schools, but because the children were so few he had no word of encouragement for them or for their teachers, and naturally both teachers and children felt and shared his despondency.

So it was with other things. He was no longer zealous, and his people, in consequence, became so indifferent to everything except the things that were of obligation that when the month of May came around, he wondered wearily if it was worth while decorating an altar and saying the Rosary, when no one would come to the chapel from Sunday to Sunday. Returning one day from a long, hot ride, he had almost decided not to have devotions at all, as the people would not attend them, when he found a letter from home waiting for him.

"When you get this letter," his sister wrote, "the month of May will be beginning, and every evening when I go to the devotions I will say the Rosary for you. Think of me, kneeling before the altar where we used to pray together that Our Lady would accept you for her missioner. Now I am alone here, but you, surrounded by your dear Chinese, are also praying to Our Lady, so we are still united, and I shall never cease to pray that you may ever remain the faithful missioner of Heaven's Queen."

He dropped the letter and his thoughts flew back over miles of sea and land, over the years that had passed since the days of which his sister wrote, when they had been children together

and their great thought for the future had been that he should be Our Lady's missioner. Our Lady's missioner! And he had thought of letting her month pass by with no outward sign of his love for her, with no effort to encourage the devotion of his flock!

In spite of his fatigue and the lateness of the hour, he went out to the straw-thatched chapel and set to work preparing a place of honor for the May altar. From his own house he took a colored picture of Our Lady, which he had brought with him from home and for which one of his Christians had made an ornamented frame. As he carried this picture along, a Chinese, passing by, stopped to look with surprise and curiosity at his burden. The man was a stranger, and Father Leo did not give him another thought until he saw him again at the chapel door watching his every movement as he put the picture in its place.

“By what name, O Stranger,” said the onlooker in a respectful tone, “do you call the lady whom you honor as though she were an ancestor of your own?”

“She is my mother,” replied the priest. “The mother of my God, and given by Him to me as my mother, and her name is Mary.”

“Your mother,” repeated the man. “But how can that be? You are not yet an old man, and in my family that lady has been venerated for two hundred years.”

“Then you are a Christian?” exclaimed the priest.

“I am a Chinese,” replied the other.

It took Father Leo some time to discover that the great-great-grandfather of this man had been a mandarin in Peking and had brought a picture of Our Lady, holding the Infant Jesus in her arms, to his home in a village that stood on the outskirts of the district. Whether or not the mandarin had himself become a Christian was uncertain, for none of his descendants remembered any of his teaching, but, though pagans, they still venerated the picture as a portrait of a queen of the next world.

Once a year, in the month of August, they publicly honored it, burning joss before it and carrying it in procession like the rest of their gods.

The Chinese was delighted when Father Leo suggested that he should visit the picture, and a few days later the priest set out for the distant village with more eagerness and hope than he had felt for weeks. He was greeted with delight by the mandarin's clan, and welcomed at the home of his new-found friend. There, in the place of honor usually given to an idol, was an unmistakably Christian picture, a picture, as the owner had said, of the Queen of Heaven with her Son in her arms.

The news that Father Leo possessed and venerated a picture of their Lady made a great effect upon the villagers, and the good impression was deepened by the assurance that in August all Christians celebrate a feast — the Assumption of the Queen of Heaven — just as they did. Seeing he had gained their attention, Father Leo went on to tell the people that he felt sure their ancestor had been a Christian, and his descendants had only returned to the pagan practices of their neighbors owing to persecution and the lack of priests to encourage and instruct. He assured them that the Queen of Heaven herself had sent him to teach them the truth, and that if they really wished to please her they ought to listen to the doctrines of Christianity.

So important a step, however, could not be taken without much consideration, and so a family council was held, to which Father Leo was invited. He claimed to be the servant of their venerated Lady, and it was in her name he came to tell them more of her and of her Son. In all the years the image had been in their house, he asked them, had the Lady ever asked them to do her a favor? To this, the head of the family replied that, on the contrary, it was she who had granted favors to them, and he related how when a terrible fire had once broken out in the village a woman had been seen pouring

water on the roof of their house, so that they alone of all the village were saved. In the time of the speaker's father, when the whole district had been devastated with cholera, their house again had been the only one that was spared, and night after night a woman and child had been seen to guard the door. Others, too, not of the family, gave testimony that many, when stricken with disease, had been taken to the venerated picture and had been cured. These, the speaker declared, were only a few of the many favors their Lady had bestowed upon them, and if, as Father Leo said, it was her wish that they should listen to him, would they refuse her first and only request?

So it came about that all the clan attended Father Leo's teaching, and when they had heard the truths of Christianity, they begged the missioner to remain with them to teach them how to honor the Blessed Lady truly and to know and love her Son.

This was what Father Leo had dreamed of — almost an entire village eager to learn the truth, fervent souls who begged for the doctrine and sacraments of the Church. But there were great difficulties in his way. The village lay two days' journey from his nearest mission post, and he could stay only a short time with them and begin their teaching. He had no money to pay a catechist, and though the people were eager to give ground and build a church they were too poor to support a teacher. Yet Father Leo did not despair. In spite of his poverty, he hoped to succeed at last, for he felt that this new mission was Our Lady's own, and as she had sent him to it, so would she find the means to continue her work.

As he rode homewards he thought within himself that he had been wanting in faith in the past, and so his difficulties had overcome him; but God, instead of punishing him for having allowed his zeal and fervor to wane, had given him, through the Blessed Virgin, this favor and this lesson. He was

determined for the future never to forget that he was Our Lady's missioner, and his renewed zeal soon brought back the fervor of his own people. Whilst praying for their own needs, they added, at his request, a daily petition to Our Lady that she would always inspire those at home to help, with prayer and alms, in the great work of making true and fervent Christians of the poor pagans, some of whom had so long honored her in their own way.



“The news that Father Leo possessed and venerated a picture of their Lady made a great effect upon the villagers.”
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THE GOLDEN BROTHERS

IF you please, Father, Mr. Kin from Six Family Village wishes to see you."

Father de Groef nodded, finished the psalm he was reciting in his office, and turned to the Chinese boy, who acted as his butler — with all the other domestic offices thrown in — "Ask Mr. Kin to come in."

The visitor, who was already standing on the threshold, bowed deeply as he approached the priest. Although his dress, and, when he spoke, his tongue were Chinese, his face betrayed his Mongolian origin. From long experience, the priest knew how tenacious are the superstitions of Buddhism in the race, so he was surprised when his visitor, whom he had known as a pagan ever since his arrival in the district fifteen years before, declared his wish to become a Christian.

Father de Groef had seen too many would-be converts, to feel convinced at a first interview of the sincerity of such a desire. Without committing himself to anything, he told Mr. Kin how glad he was, as a follower and a lover of the True God, to find others desiring to know and to love Him too. He praised his intention of becoming a Christian, referred to the Buddhist superstitions which he would have to give up, and encouraged him to persevere in his good resolutions.

"Then when will you make me a Christian?" asked Mr. Kin.

"Gently, gently," said Father de Groef. "There are many things to be considered first. This is not like putting on your Sunday coat, you know, this becoming a Christian."

"I'd say it is more like changing one's skin," said Mr. Kin, grinning.

Something in the man's tone encouraged the priest to believe in the genuineness of his expressed desire, and it was with the promise of a visit to Six Families on the first opportunity, that he sent his visitor away for the time being.

Six Family Village lay some seventy-five miles from the mission, and a missioner's time is not his own, so that Father de Groef's promised visit had not taken place, when, about a month after his first journey to Notre Dame, Mr. Kin again presented himself at the mission. This time it was on Sunday and the Christian families of the district were hearing Mass. Only when the service was over did the priest know that the Mongolian had been one of his congregation, but when, after breakfast, he asked his boy if Mr. Kin was waiting, there was no sign of him anywhere. The same thing happened several times at intervals, and then Kin again presented himself, asking for Baptism. But on this day, even though it was a feast, there was no Mass at the mission, for the priest had been called to an urgent sick case at a distance.

Several days later he returned, and his first business, after saying Mass, was, as usual, to visit the school. This was a hut, built, like its neighbors, around a wooden frame and roofed and walled with grass. By what seemed merest chance, Father de Groef suddenly stumbled upon Mr. Kin, who, hidden behind folds of the grass matting, was drinking in every word that the catechist was teaching to the children.

"Why, what are you doing here?" cried the missioner, in surprise. Mr. Kin, he had learned, belonged to a family of some importance; he was, indeed, grand-nephew of a past Grand Llama, and his family had built a shrine and conducted pilgrimages there. The man's attitude, like a culprit in hiding, was therefore, most unexpected.

"I was learning the catechism, Father," replied the pagan, gravely.

It developed that Mr. Kin had made use of this hiding-

place in the school on the occasion of each of his visits to the Mission. But he had not been satisfied with learning only what the catechist taught; he had borrowed books from a Christian friend, and now, when questioned, was able to answer without error on all the points put before him.

"Now, Father," he said, when the examination was over, "will you baptize me?"

The missioner prescribed two weeks more, to be spent at the Mission, before pronouncing Mr. Kin ready for Baptism. Then, rejoicing in the new and Christian name of Thomas, the fervent convert set out for his home, taking with him a Chinese Sister who was to remain at his house and instruct Mrs. Kin and the other women of the family.

Before long the whole household was received into the Church. But even then Mr. Kin was not content. Two more things, he declared, were needed for his complete happiness: one was a Mission to be established at Six Family Village itself; the other was the conversion of his youngest brother.

Years earlier, the father of the Kin family had ruined himself through extravagance in entertaining pilgrims who came to the family shrine. To provide for at least one of the family, he had handed over his youngest son, then a boy of eleven years, to the bonzes of a monastery in Manchuria, several days' journey from Six Family Village.

During the years that passed since then, Thomas Kin had succeeded to the headship of the family. Even before he himself was converted to the True Faith, he had often wondered if his young brother was really happy as a bonze. In his heart he felt that he was not. And now he understood his own doubts. How, he asked himself, could any one whose mind was sufficiently cultivated to become, not only a bonze, but, young as he was, the superior of the bonzes, be content without wanting — something? As a pagan, he knew not what this something might be; as a Christian, he now knew it was — God.

In one way, it was fortunate that young Kin was head of the bonzes, for when his brother Thomas walked the seventy miles that lay between Six Family village and the monastery, there was no difficulty about being able to listen to all that the newly-made Christian had to say. At first the bonze listened incredulously; then he was tempted to refuse to hearken to those strange new doctrines which aroused in his heart longings not known or heeded before. Could it be right to consider anything so totally opposed to what, until now, he had believed and followed unquestioningly?

But now that he had begun to question, he saw things in a new light.

He had honestly followed what he had been taught — but why?

He could find no answer.

Did all those around him strive for even the best that they knew?

If they conquered inclinations to evil, who was pleased? What did it matter, after all?

Such questions as these, questions to which he could find no answer, surged through his mind, and in his perplexity he turned to his Christian brother. Thomas Kin had replies ready for every difficulty, and his words awoke in the heart of the bonze a feeling of love for the Pure Being Whose religion called into practice every noble impulse of the human heart. He learned that by putting the noble impulses into practice, man could not only please and glorify this holy Spirit, but he could earn for himself happiness eternal. Surely it was in this belief and practice, and not in his old ideas, that truth and peace were to be found.

So far, listening without interruption to his brother, the bonze saw his way clearly enough, but then came the difficulty of how to follow the Truth. If the other bonzes learned what was in his mind, they would look upon him as a renegade, and

— the bonze already realized how splendid a thing is martyrdom, but, in the strength of his twenty-three years, he wished to live for God, for a while at least, before dying for Him. So Thomas Kin returned alone from his first missionary visit, leaving behind him the very books that had helped so much in his own conversion. His brother would study; he would pray; and in God's good time his path would be made plain to him.

Meanwhile, the second desire filled the heart and mind of Thomas Kin. Although his first venture at conversion had not been crowned with immediate success, Kin knew in his heart that his brother would in time become a Christian. Prayer was the only weapon he could use to hasten that time, and to his prayers he added unceasing apostleship amongst his neighbors. His wife made her friends welcome to listen to the teaching of the Chinese Sister who had come from the mission to instruct her and the children, and when the time came for this teacher to return home, she was able to report to Father de Groef that his presence was eagerly awaited at Six Families by a bevy of catechumens who intended to beg for reception into the Church.

When, with little delay, Father de Groef paid his promised visit to Thomas Kin, he found not only those who were prepared for Baptism, but practically the whole of Six Families, so favorably disposed, that he begged the Bishop to spare a resident missioner for that district. It seemed then as though Thomas Kin's whole desire was about to be fulfilled.

A second visit to his brother made this certain. The difficulties which stood in the bonze's way were not lessened, but he had decided that discretion was, as usual, the better part of valor, and early one morning, before his brethren were about, he joined his brother outside the pagoda and they started on their seventy-mile tramp for Six Families.

In his old home the erstwhile bonze found occupation to his hand. Thomas Kin had resolved to build a church and a house

for the priest whom the Bishop had promised to send. Early and late the two brothers with workmen at their command labored at these buildings, till both stood ready for the coming of the Son of God. Then, with the Blessed Sacrament close to his own home, with the poor people around, who in the days of his father's affluence had been the family's dependents, all, family by family, embracing the Christian faith, Thomas Kin felt he could ask no more happiness from God.

In the ex-bonze, the pastor who was appointed to Six Families found the making of a model catechist. But in the work of a new and growing mission he felt he had not time to instruct and cultivate this soul to its full development, so he advised the young man to seek admission to the college of Notre Dame, where a few months' study would prepare him to teach his own people at Six Families and many other catechumens.

Thomas Kin's occupations forbade his devoting as much time to study as he would have wished, and he soon began to count the days until his brother's return, when, he assured himself, he would profit by the learning of the younger man. But a short time before the happy event was due, Thomas Kin received a message, begging of him to visit his brother at Notre Dame. No reason was given for this request and Thomas responded joyfully, thinking that when he returned his brother, now Catechist Kin, would be at his side. But, for the first time, his wishes were to be thwarted.

The rector of the college was full of praise for his pupil from Six Families.

"Golden by name," exclaimed the priest referring to the name Kin, which means gold, "and golden by nature. Golden, Mr. Kin, in our eyes, is your brother, and, far better, golden is he in the eyes of God."

"Brother," said the ex-bonze, "I know your desires. When first I came to Notre Dame, they were also mine, but since —"



A CHINESE BONZE (BUDDHIST PRIEST) IN HIS
TEMPLE GARDEN

Mr. Kin's face betrayed none of the anxiety that filled his heart, for the Mongolian in this respect is like his imperturbable Chinese neighbor, but the brother knew that he was about to shatter a cherished dream.

"I had dreamed of teaching and instructing our own," went on the ex-bonze, "and maybe there was pride in the thought that one of our name, which had done so much in the past to encourage superstition at Six Families, would help to spread the Truth in the same place. But, brother, God in His goodness has called me to something higher even than founding a Christian family and spreading His word from my own home. He has called me to His own service."

"Yes, Mr. Kin," said the rector of the college, "your brother is to be our brother too." And he explained that the ex-bonze had begged to be allowed to join the Congregation of the Sacred Heart as a lay-brother and had received the approval of the head of the house.

For a moment Mr. Kin's dreams for the future tottered, like a house of cards, and fell in ruins before his eyes; but even as they fell, a prouder house rose up. His brother a member of a religious order! In his heart Mr. Kin had hoped that if he lived to be a very old man he might have the happiness of seeing his son's son aspire to the priesthood. But this was an honor of which he had not even dreamed.

"Knowing that you would consent," went on the priest, "we have even chosen the name — your own — that in Religion he will bear — Brother Thomas."

And in the years that have passed, since that day, Brother Thomas, the fifteenth native member of the Congregation, has been succeeded by many, many others. He even had, at intervals, the happiness of going out to teach at Six Families, after all. It was on one occasion of this kind that Mr. Kin questioned another catechist, a brother also of the same Congregation, about his brother.

"And Brother Thomas?" said Mr. Kin. "Is he indeed a useful member of your Congregation?"

"Useful? Brother Thomas?" said the other, almost scandalized at such a question. "Why, that word is not enough to tell you what he is. Amongst ourselves we call him 'the Golden Brother'."

E GLAD

THE TREASURES OF THOSE WHO LOVE JESUS.

Treasure of Gladness,
I accept it in this
I love you. Jesus as a
holocaust of love. The
Sacrifice of my will.
affection.

ould have stayed on in the farm
ied, with his brother's son doing for
the hard work in the house off her
ould come in to it all after her
been called to be a priest, she de-
ver to the young people at once,
n on what they should pay to her.
d her better than staying on in the
going and, though not much past
fail so that a quiet life in rooms in
her than the bustle and responsi-
en — the chief of her reasons —
in walking distance of the church.
married life, she had been obliged
ss on Sundays and holidays, on the
, and on those days, four times a
the neighborhood was held in the
she remembered the first time that
his father's place in serving one of
here baby he seemed to be, but he
s like a man — understanding the
ceremonies, and ready to wait on every want of the priest.
Why, even in those days, he was preparing for the call that
was to come to him. And when it did come, his parents gave
him gladly to God, though he was their only son; and after
her husband's death Mrs. Donovan's lonely life was cheered
by the thought of that wonderful day that was coming, when
Father Daniel Donovan would himself stand at the altar and
hold in his consecrated hands the Body of Our Lord.

Every morning, now, in the city, Mrs. Donovan had Mass within her reach; every morning found her in the church; and as year came after year, and she was always there, the place she had come to occupy would have seemed quite strange without her. Danny's yearly vacation was what she lived for, and if each time he came home she was a little smaller than last year, a little more frail, he soon forgot that his first impression had been one of change, because in herself she seemed to be the same.

Danny got more than halfway through his studies, when he was obliged to give her a terrible shock. Their own Bishop would have accepted him for their home diocese, but a further call was sounding in his ears. He felt that Our Lord's words were meant very directly for him, when He said, "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them —" Surely it was because this call was intended for him, that he seemed always to be coming across accounts of the foreign missions; allusions to the millions of souls, in China and elsewhere, in need of baptism; appeals for funds, which he had not to give; appeals for workers in Our Lord's vineyards. And one worker he could give — himself. This was what he had to tell his mother, after consulting his confessor at the college. He would never be a curate at home. He would say his first Mass at home, and stay with her for perhaps a few weeks after that. Then he would have to say good-by to her for years, probably for ever.

She was one of those who knew nothing, cared nothing because of not knowing, for the unbaptized heathens, in China or anywhere else. Yet, holy woman as she was, when Mrs. Donovan knew that Danny had heard a call from God to work in the missions, her prayers were all that the Holy Will should be done, and that she might be made glad of Danny's vocation. Seldom though she had missed Mass before, now she was never absent. Wet or fine she was there, and praying for

Danny; and for herself she prayed that she might be made glad.

It was within a year of his ordination when she became so ill that even the short walk to the church was too much for her failing strength.

“Mrs. Donovan,” said one of the priests, meeting her as she struggled along the short way that separated the church from her house, “this walk in the early mornings is really too much for you; you’ll be doing yourself harm if you come out this cold weather when you are not really fit for it.”

“But it’s to pray for my boy, Father,” she insisted, “and the day would seem so lonesome if I didn’t get to Mass of a morning.”

“Still, Mrs. Donovan,” urged the priest, “it’s not like a Sunday. You could pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament later in the day, when it is less cold. There is no obligation to go to Mass on a week day.”

“It’s no obligation, Father,” she repeated, “but it’s my splendid privilege, and I’m very loath to give it up.”

Indeed it was only the doctor’s absolute command that later kept her at home.

“Doctor, dear,” she said, “I know there’s not much you can do for the likes of me, but there’s two prayers I send up to Heaven, morning and night,—that I may live to see my boy priested, and that I may be made glad of his vocation to go on the missions. Do what you can for me about the first; the other I must leave to God Almighty.”

It seemed, not only to the doctor, but to everyone who saw her, that Mrs. Donovan could not last for as many weeks as there were months due to pass before the ordination of Danny; and yet her prayers went on, though she and others knew they would never be offered in the church again, for she could not leave her room.

The end was not likely to be sudden, but Danny understood

that any day might bring a summons to him to go home to see her die, and he, too, insisted in prayer, on the two favors for which his mother was longing — that she might be spared to be present at his First Mass, and that she might be rewarded for the welcome she had given to the Will of God, in the sacrifice of her wish to see him a priest at home in Ireland, by being made actually glad of his vocation.

He knew well that this last was something more than, humanly speaking, was probable; and after a time, too, he realized that the former request — that his mother's life might be prolonged over the six months until his ordination should take place — was practically impossible. Then, one morning, a letter came which almost put an end to any hope of their prayers being favorably answered. Mrs. Donovan was appreciably worse. Her mind was perfectly clear, but her bodily strength had all but ebbed away. The doctor's report was that she might live a few weeks longer, or that death might come to her at any moment.

The Vicar Apostolic for whose mission Danny was to be ordained had received orders from Rome to undertake a work which demanded his immediate return to China, and on this account he wished the students, who had been expecting to sail with him in six months' time, to prepare for immediate ordination. It was on account of this that the president had sent for Danny Donovan and another seminarian, and he had told them that they must be ready to begin their retreat at once so that the day of their ordination could be advanced as the Vicar Apostolic directed.

Then, all at once, Danny felt certain that his mother would live to see the fulfillment of her desire, a fulfillment that was being made possible in a way no one had thought of. During the days of retreat, no fear of her dying troubled him. Only, whilst preparing with all his heart for the tremendous sacrament of Holy Orders, Danny prayed again and

again — indeed, the intention was with him always — that since Almighty God was so wonderfully answering the first part of their prayer, He would grant the second also.

The day of Danny's ordination came, and though his mother could not witness that ceremony, the Bishop had given permission that Danny's first Mass should be said in his mother's room — the room where she lay dying. And there Danny said it.

A first Mass unlike any other, it was. Once again Mrs. Donovan enjoyed her splendid privilege of hearing Mass, and with it this time was the wonderful honor of being the mother of a priest. Afterwards he came to her, and she kissed his anointed hands, and then laid her own upon his head.

“Mother,” he murmured brokenly, “our prayers have been answered in a most wonderful way,— the first part, at least.”

“The first part!” her voice was so weak as to be only a whisper. “Dear and darling, sure the second part, as well, and more! Amn’t I glad and proud and grateful for your call to foreign parts, for without the blessing of that call, why ever would you have got your priesting for me to see?”

For a week more she lived on. Just alive, just able to receive Holy Communion from his hands, and then God took her and it was her priest son who said the last prayers over her coffin and her grave. And in his heart there was scarcely room for sorrow, because of the thanksgiving that filled it, when he thought of how their prayers had been heard.

THE LURE OF FASTING

FATHER JOHN stretched out a thin hand that, despite its tan, and the Chinese garb that its owner wore, betrayed his nationality. Taking up a sheet of paper, he re-read a letter that had come to him that morning, and sighed again on reading it.

The writer, Father Celestine, had been his companion in the sunny convent in Italy where they had both joined the Franciscan Order. He had been with him, too, on their long journey to the Far East; but when the friends arrived in China, they had separated, and it seemed as though their lives had fallen in very different places. Father Celestine had been appointed to a district with a fair proportion of Christians in its dense population, and in every letter to Father John he told, just as he had told to-day, of the converts he was making, of the devotion of his Christians, of improvements in his church and progress in his schools.

And, reading all this, Father John could not keep back a sigh of envy,—quickly followed, however, by a murmured prayer of thanks that somewhere, even if not at Siu-gia-zon, there was a flourishing mission. For his own experiences during the five years he had spent in China had been widely different from those of Father Celestine. Put in charge of a huge district, he had found his Christians scattered miles from each other and from the church. The handful within reach of his bamboo-walled dwelling were more interested in their fields than in their souls, in the coming rice harvest than in the world to come. No catechumens came to him for instruction, and the best that could be said for his years of toil was that



A FRANCISCAN MISSIONER IN CHINA, WITH SOME OF HIS
CHRISTIANS

they had not allowed the flickering flame of faith to die down entirely in his corner of China.

The comparison between his own work and the account of Father Celestine's successes was too depressing to dwell upon for long, and with a brave thought of the gallant old missioner whom he had helped during his first months at Siu-gia-zon he manfully banished the depression which had threatened to overwhelm him.

"Keep cheerful," the old priest used to say. "God has no use for a grumbler. If you can't get glory for Him from others, at least give Him what you can yourself. Fast and pray. Pray and fast. If God gives you the grace to make converts, He expects you to give Him payment for that grace in fasting and in prayer."

Chinese foodstuffs and the way they are cooked are so unpalatable to Europeans that, even if Father John had not intended faithfully to carry out the old priest's advice, he would have done so perforce. Now, facing for the many hundredth time the problem of how to touch the hearts of the callous crowd about him, he determined to carry out more strictly than ever his old predecessor's precepts. Lent was about to begin, and Father John determined to keep the forty days of fasting as his Divine Master had done, as nearly as human nature would allow. The long hours of traveling from one tiny outpost of the Faith to another, gave him time enough for prayer, and he determined to make these journeys in future without breaking his fast till night.

It had been impossible for the Friar to keep secret the existence of the hair-shirt which he wore under the blue gown of his adopted country, the gown with which he was obliged to replace his beloved brown habit. Now his catechist, who traveled with him, learned of the further mortification he was imposing upon himself, and through the catechist a rumor of his fasting got abroad.

The disciples of both Confucius and Lao-tse prescribe many fastings in honor of various gods, so that the Chinese both understand and approve of fasting as a part of religious ceremonial. Not far from Siu-gia-zon there was a leader amongst the people, one Lieu, who was a special authority upon this subject. Fasting much himself, and thinking often about it, this Lieu realized that, though the fasts of his sect were innumerable, they were all offered in honor of lesser deities, none being offered to Heaven direct. The more he thought of this, the less satisfied did Lieu feel with the tenets of Confucianism, yet no one to whom he confided his difficulties could suggest any remedy for them.

One day, however, a man who came from Siu-gia-zon and who was acquainted with Bonaventure Liu-siu-ju, the catechist of Father John, heard old Lieu making his usual complaint. He at once told him that there was a man at his village who taught a religion in honor of the God in Heaven, and who fasted so rigorously that he never ate before sundown. Judging by the name of this man's religion, it seemed certain that this fasting was offered direct to Heaven. Learning the whereabouts of the strange teacher, old Lieu could hardly wait until the morrow to go in search of one who, it seemed likely, would be able to solve for him the difficulty of years.

When Lieu reached the bamboo hut, beside the similarly constructed church of Siu-gia-zon, Father John was absent, but Bonaventure, who was at home, declared that certainly the fasts of the Church were offered in honor of the God of Heaven, and he also revealed the mortifications which his master was voluntarily undergoing for love of this God.

Old Lieu could scarcely believe his ears. Here, without doubt, was the solution of his difficulty, and he eagerly accepted the catechism in which, Bonaventure told him, he would find set forth every tenet of the Church of the God of Heaven. The catechist also told the old man that, if these tenets pleased

him, he might return in a week's time and make acquaintance with the priest who fasted so rigorously, and who, if Lieu wished, would, in due course, and after full instruction, give him entrance to the Church of the God of Heaven.

But it did not take old Lieu a week to make up his mind about this. Going home, he read the catechism, and read it again, till its meaning was clear to him. Then he studied a little book of simple meditations upon the truths of Christianity, that the catechist had also lent him; and the beauty and the harmony of the religion thus set forth sent the old man back, long before the week was out, begging for admission to the Church of God.

In Father John's absence, Bonaventure could do no more than add to the old man's store of instruction, bidding him return in three days' time. These days were spent by Lieu in publishing amongst his neighbors the wonderful tidings that he himself had learned. He was a man of education, and his opinion was of considerable importance in Ma-sia-zon, so that his word carried great weight. Many besides his own family listened to him, and, believing what he said, they determined to accompany him on his search for admission to the religion of the God of Heaven.

Father John was weary and depressed as he rode on his homeward way. The country through which he traveled was beautiful and fertile. The heights of the mountains were covered with forests, but their lower slopes were cultivated on a system more intensive than anything known in Europe, for the Chinese husbandman is the personification of patient industry. The fields were peopled with men busy over their cotton or their tobacco, and villages at frequent intervals told how dense the population was. But alas! amongst them all the weary missioner found no fertile spot whereon to cast the seed of faith. Even the few and scattered Christians had not welcomed him with any great signs of joy. His journey did

enable a certain number to make their Easter duties, but, from living so far from a church, surrounded by pagans, and often in fear of persecution, their faith had weakened, and the reception of their Easter Communion was more a duty than a joy.

Doubtless, Father John's weeks of fasting had weakened him and left him a prey to the demon of depression, but he was determined not to give way to despondency, and, nearing his home, he forced himself to repeat the "Te Deum" and the "Magnificat." His soul, at least, would magnify the Lord, even if he had little hope of leading others to do likewise.

Bonaventure, knowing the exhausted condition in which the priest always returned from his journeyings, had bidden the cook to prepare a supper, palatable at least, if meager. Long fasting had so weakened the Friar that even rice boiled in water disgusted him almost as much as did the Chinese dainties, and to secure sufficient nourishment to keep him alive he had bought some goats which, living on the wild herbage of the mountain, supplied milk, from which his boy made cheese and butter as well. To-night, he found awaiting him a fragrant stew of rice and milk, and this, with bread of a sort and butter and cheese, put new strength into him again. After he had eaten, the catechist came to him with an account of the days during which he had been absent from the mission.

"And there was a man from Ma-sia-zon seeking your holiness," he concluded.

"Indeed?" replied Father John, wearily, expecting perhaps some complaint that his goats had strayed down into the rice fields or the cotton. "And what did he wish?"

"He wished to be baptized," replied Bonaventure with the immovability of his race, though he knew that this was a piece of news such as he never before had to tell.

"What!" exclaimed Father John. "A man from Ma-sia-zon! Why, we have no Christians in that district?"

"This Lieu desires to be of the religion of the King of

Heaven. Aye, he, and his family, and his neighbors, and his friends."

If the good catechist thought to produce a great effect, he must have been disappointed, for Father John said nothing, absolutely nothing, for the very good reason that he was deprived of speech. Then, after a moment's pause —

"Tell more," he said.

And Bonaventure told of the fasting and the questioning, of the loan of the catechism, and of the developments that followed, all to be crowned upon the morrow by the reception of Lieu and his neophytes. That night Father John slept but little and, had his boy been equally wakeful, he would have heard the dull, even thud of the discipline, continuing long after darkness had fallen; for, if Father John's fasting had secured so liberal a reward, something more must be offered for perseverance and for further successes.

On the following day came Lieu, and with him his two sons. Their demand was for instant Baptism, reception without delay into the Church of the God of Heaven. But this could not be without the usual term of probation. Yet, Father John found that the old man had mastered the truths and accepted the mysteries of Christianity in such a wonderful way, and that his sons were also exceptionally instructed, so the time of their probation was made shorter than usual.

Joyfully at last dawned the day for their baptism. Lieu chose the name of John, whilst his sons placed themselves under the patronage of St. James and St. Philip. Further, they brought with them a crowd of neighbors, all begging for instruction in the religion that honored the King of Heaven and that made Lieu and his family so happy. To secure this teaching, old John Lieu undertook to build an oratory at Massia-zon, on the ground of one Hotai-qui, who had discovered, on learning the tenets of Christianity, that his forefathers had once been Christians, too.

But that is another story.

FANG OF THE WOUS

THERE is a word in the Chinese language that means having just enough to provide for one's daily bread. Those who can use this word about themselves are not styled poor, for there are thousands who never dream of reaching even such a position. There are countless Chinese families who keep alive, yet have not the faintest idea, to-day, how soul and body are to be sustained to-morrow. A handful of millet, a cupful of rice, a scrap of material for clothing — but beyond that, nothing: this state of things the Chinese do call poverty. It was the state of the family of Wou-yong-hiang, even before famine came to the district where they lived. Then, indoors or out, there was literally nothing to eat, for Wou or his wife or his three children, and things looked desperate even to him.

There was only one possible way of escaping actual starvation, and that was to sell one of the children. Every Chinese father wishes to have a son. There are rites to be performed after death, which only a male successor can carry out, and without which the soul is not supposed to be able to rest in peace. Therefore, boy children can always be disposed of advantageously to those who are childless or the unfortunate parents of girls only. Wou knew that the price of one of his sons would bring him, not only subsistence for the present, but the wherewithal to buy seed for the spring planting, to replace the seed that in their extremity the family had been obliged to eat.

The eldest son would fetch the most, but Wou could not bring himself to part with his first-born. The youngest was still a baby in its mother's arms. The second seemed the best choice, and so, phlegmatic as far as appearances went, Wou handed over the sturdy five-year-old to a merchant who dealt



"You knew that the price of one of his sons would bring him, not only subsistence for the present, but the wherewithal to buy seed for the spring planting." (Page 164)

in such commodities. The father's heart ached, for all his unemotional exterior, but for once he returned to his home with a full purse.

Late that night there came a whimpering outside the wretched hut that was the Wou home. Opening the door, the parents found that their boy had come back to them. He had not been taken far by his purchaser and had been able to escape and make his return. The father's first impulse was to take the boy back at once to the man who had purchased him, but the mother now refused to let him go. Rather, would she part with baby, who was too young to realize that he was being sold.

So the purchase money was returned to the merchant, and the baby was handed over to a childless couple of the neighborhood, the Fangs, who had long coveted one of their neighbor's sons. In return for the baby, the new parents, though not so rich as the merchant, were able to pay five measures of grain and two large sacks of yams, which was enough to keep the Wou family alive until the next harvest.

For the moment the Wous were saved, but the district in which they lived was barren and unfertile. News came of greater prosperity elsewhere, and they determined to move some hundreds of miles eastward, where, rumor told, there was fertile land to be had for the cultivation. At about the same time the Fangs also determined to try and better themselves, but the goal they had in view was westward, and so, in spite of the fact that the child of one household was a member of the other, the Wous and the Fangs drifted apart and lost sight of each other.

The new home of the Wous was called Ping-to, and they found it to be a Christian settlement. Their first feeling, on discovering this, was one of fear, almost of disgust, but they soon learned that the stories they had heard of Christianity were untrue and that Christians were quite good neighbors. Indeed, when the harvest was over and they were made wel-

come to the use of the mill that belonged to the mission, the Wous owned to each other that Christians were very good neighbors.

It was whilst making use of the mill that Mrs. Wou made the acquaintance of the priest. Father Herman noticed that whilst the poor, and to him unknown, woman was mechanically turning the handle, tears were dropping silently from her eyes into the meal, and he was not long in finding out her trouble. The eldest of her boys was dead; Woung was now the only son of his parents, or at least the only son of whose whereabouts they knew, for the Fangs and their adopted son had passed out of their lives entirely; and the mother grieved for her first-born and her baby.

“What a pity,” said the priest when he had heard her story, “that you are not Christians! You would then at least have the comfort of praying for your boys, and God grants such wonderful favors through prayer, that He might enable you to find the Fangs and your youngest son again.”

“If only I could do that,” replied Mrs. Wou, “I think I could cease mourning for him I have lost through death.”

But the suggestion as to embracing Christianity was apparently unheeded. However, Father Herman made inquiries, and finding out that the Wous were honest and respectable in their poverty, broached the subject again, when he saw Mrs. Wou at the mill. Twice he spoke, and twice he received evasive answers. Mrs. Wou had no idea of what being a Christian really meant. She had a vague notion that one gave one’s name to the priest, who wrote it in a book and sent it miles away over the sea — and what might not be done to it there? A groundless, yet nevertheless a terrifying thought! However, with the fear there was remembrance of what the priest had said of the power of prayer and what it might do towards the finding of her boy. Thus the seed was laid for the family’s conversion, and gradually it bore fruit in their attending the

mission services, being instructed and becoming a good Christian household.

Woung, the second son, was then sixteen. Being of an age to found a family, and having work at the mission as a carter, he took a Christian wife and settled down to cultivate, and by degrees to enlarge, the grain-growing fields of his father. By the time that the old people died, their son was a man of considerable means. Moving northward into Mongolia, where land could be had easily, he built himself a fine house and tilled all the land about him. As his possessions increased, a whole village of huts sprang up upon his property, the homes of the men and women who worked his land for him.

Christianity was no empty form to Woung, and as his village took shape he built a hall which served as a school during the week, and as a meeting place on Sundays. There the catechist, or Woung himself, read prayers for all assembled, until, at Woung's repeated request, a native priest was spared for the district. Then the hall became a church, the home of the Blessed Sacrament and the center of the whole settlement. From a worldly, and as far as one could tell, from a spiritual point of view, Woung then had everything that heart could desire.

But he himself knew that there was one thing lacking. When his mother was dying she had told him of the never-ending longing to find again the son from whom, as a baby, starvation had obliged her to part, and Woung had promised that he would never rest until his brother, now called Fang, was found. But what had become of Fang, born of the family Wou? Two hundred miles from the place where eventually Woung made his Christian settlement, young Fang had grown to manhood, with his adopted parents. Unlike the Wous, the Fangs had not found prosperity. Poor they had been; poorer they became; and when their adopted son was called upon to perform for them the funeral ceremonies for which he had been purchased,

Fang of the Wous was no better off than were the workmen of his brother Woung.

In the seething population of China it was foolish for Fang even to think of finding his family again. And, after a time, a step that he contemplated taking seemed to put an end to the tiny spark of possibility which before might have existed. Fang, perfectly unaware of the whereabouts or the prosperity of Woung, was contemplating becoming a Christian. As Mrs. Wou in her growing prosperity had told Father Herman of her longing to find her son, so in his poverty did the son tell a priest of his desire to find his long-lost relatives. And in one case, as in the other, the seeker had been advised to pray, to pray for what, humanly speaking, seemed impossible.

Year by year the prosperity of Woung increased, and when he had the means to build a real church, as well as the hall that he had already handed over to the priest, and the Vicar Apostolic came to consecrate the building, the achievement was a proud one for him and for his family. When the ceremony was over, the Vicar Apostolic went to the house of Woung for rest and refreshment, and as they spoke together, the conversation naturally turned upon the spread of the Catholic Church in China.

"I am indeed blessed," Woung said, as he pointed to the forty or fifty houses that were gathered round the new church, the homes of his work people, who, like himself, were Christians. "I am indeed blessed to be in the midst of such a center of Christianity as this place has become."

"And now with your beautiful church in this settlement," said the Vicar, "it will with God's blessing continue to develop."

"To think," went on Woung, "that in my childhood, at He-ma-Hou, even the name of Christianity was unknown. Oh! blessed famine, that sent my parents to a place where there was a mission and a church."

"Did you say that you came from He-ma-Hou?" questioned his guest, a sudden flash of remembrance coming to him. "And did you ever hear of a family called Fang?"

"Hear of them?" repeated Woung, "Why, it was the Fang family who were our next-door neighbors and who, during the famine, bought my young brother from my poor father."

"And your brother would now be a man of between forty and fifty?" questioned the surprised Vicar.

"Certainly," replied Woung. "But, Reverend Father, can it be that in your travels you have learned of his whereabouts?"

The Vicar had a wonderful memory, and perhaps in this case it was helped by the prayers of the brothers. He recalled how, when he was a missionary priest, he had been approached by a poor laborer, of the name of Fang of the Wous, who had asked for instruction, and he remembered how this man had mentioned that his becoming a Christian would cut him off from any hope of being reunited to his family from which he had been separated in his infancy, and which, with the pertinacious love of family inherent in the Chinese, he had always hoped to find some day.

Woung, landed proprietor and man of wealth, was not long in sending for his poor brother, and thus after forty years the two were reunited. That the priest who had received Fang into the Church should in his later journeyings have come to the new home of Woung, was a marvelous dispensation of Providence. When the Fang family was raised from poverty, and installed in comfort on the estate of the newly-found relative, the celebrations that took place were largely in thanksgiving to the good God, Who had so blessed the families and answered their persevering prayers.

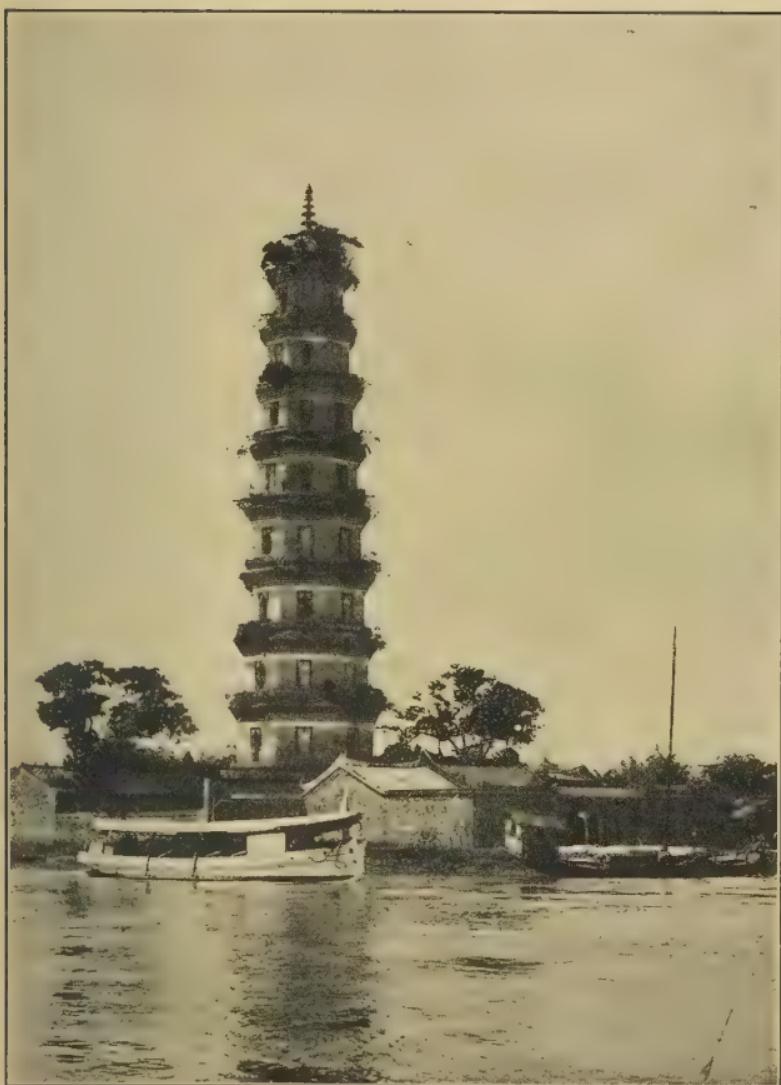
A HERO AT LAST

THERE were seven children in the Van Ruyteghem family, four boys and three girls, and whilst they were growing up, if anyone had asked what they were going to be, the answer from the girls would have been, "We are going to be nuns," whilst the boys, with one exception, would have said, "We are going to be priests."

The exception was the youngest boy, whose answer was always the same — "I am going to be a hero."

And yet, when, one after another, the sisters joined the Sisters of Notre Dame, and the three elder brothers became Friars Minor, the youngest — followed their example. Only after his profession and ordination, instead of going, as his brothers had gone, to a convent in some Belgian town, Father Wenceslaus volunteered for the foreign missions. In the spring of 1914 he bade good-by to his three nun sisters, to his three priest brothers, and to Flanders, his dearly-loved mother-land, and started on a long journey to the Far East, where the vast mission of Hupeh, in China, was his destination.

Certainly, this parting from home and friends, and this exile from his country, seemed to afford him his first chance of heroism, and perhaps the feeling that his childish ambition had begun to be fulfilled helped him to bear himself bravely through the ordeal of good-bys. But his experiences on the mission field were disappointing from the heroic point of view, and when the great news of August, 1914, reached him in his Chinese presbytery, he almost regretted that he had not been content to stay at home, like his brothers, instead of wandering in search of opportunities of heroism, which, after



*“There was something of home in the wide river; the flow
of the water sang familiarly in his ears.” (Page 171)*

all, would have come to him had he remained in his beloved Belgium.

Patriotism urged Father Wenceslaus to ask for leave to return home, but he was under obedience in China and his superiors decreed that his duty lay in remaining at his post. So day after day he continued his monotonous round of work, counting the hours until he could hear again from home. When news came that his brother next in age to himself had been wounded on the Yser, where he was acting as a stretcher-bearer, Father Wenceslaus actually envied him, even though a second letter told that the wounded arm had been so shattered by shell that amputation might be necessary.

Again Father Wenceslaus applied for permission to return to his war-ravaged homeland, but again he was refused, and the Christians of Hupeh were not deprived of their pastor. Perhaps there was really more heroism in continuing the daily round of duties in this Chinese district than there would have been for Father Wenceslaus to do as his brothers did, and give his time, his limbs, even his life, to tend the sick and dying on the Belgian frontier. But this was not the sort of heroism on which, boy and man, the Belgian Franciscan had set his heart, and though not a single duty, no matter how trifling or tiresome, was allowed to pass undone, often as his work took him along the banks of the Blue River his eyes followed the stream which ran to the sea, over which he would have to travel for many days before he could reach his beloved, suffering, war-ravaged country.

There was something of home in the wide river; the flow of the water sang familiarly in his ears, just as far away across the sea the lazy Scheldt ran by his Belgian home. Many an hour during his boyhood Father Wenceslaus had spent, with his brothers, in the sluggish Flemish stream, and when the hot weather came the missionary looked forward to the coolness of the waters of the Chinese river.

He had never considered a preliminary bath in the winter, but just a short time before spring came, Father Wenceslaus was walking along the quays, a little despondent at the news from home, a little depressed at the no-more-than-ordinary success which was attending his labors in the mission, when he saw that some one — a Chinese, from the glimpse he had of him — had taken an involuntary plunge in a part of the river where for the moment there was no boat within reach.

The man could not swim. Father Wenceslaus saw at once that he was in difficulties, and though a crowd sprang into being in that miraculously instantaneous fashion only to be seen at its best in Eastern countries, no one of the rapidly increasing multitude seemed anxious to risk his life to save his countryman.

This, it seemed, was left for a stranger, a European, to do. It was left to Father Wenceslaus. Tossing aside his hat, and kicking off his shoes, the priest plunged into the river. The loose robe which he, like the members of his flock wore, got in his way at first, but once it was soaked it clung in less inconveniently to his legs, and his long, steady strokes propelled him rapidly towards the spot where the Chinese had disappeared. The current, strong though little apparent, was not easy to make headway against. Almost opposite the spot where the crowd had gathered, but nearly in mid-stream, the priest succeeded in getting hold of the drowning man, and, holding him up, seemed to be resting before trying to regain the river-bank.

The man evidently understood that he was being saved, but, beyond obeying his rescuer's instructions, he was powerless to help. Difficult as it had been for even a strong swimmer to get out to where the current had carried its victim, it was a thousand times more difficult to get back bearing the weight of an extra body. The stream flowed, not fast, but with overwhelming power, and Father Wenceslaus found his strength failing. By this time, the two had been carried some distance

downstream, and the crowd had hurried along to keep them in sight, but no one offered to go to their aid.

Once the priest was seen to raise his face and gaze as if measuring the distance to the bank. Then he turned to the sleek black head so close beside his own, and the helpless onlookers guessed that he was speaking to the man for whose sake he had risked his life. The stream carried them slowly but relentlessly along, and the efforts that the priest had made to drag his companion towards the quieter waters near the quay-side were quickly counteracted by the momentary cessation of his swimming, and they were swept along into mid-stream again.

Father Wenceslaus was weakening, and he knew it. He would not let go the body of the man he had risked so much to save, yet he knew the task he had set himself was beyond his powers to accomplish. From the bank, the onlookers could see how the man, at his rescuer's bidding, stretched out his arms to support himself, and then the priest, freeing one hand from his burden, scooped a modicum of water in it, and poured this water on the pagan's head. No one was near enough to see his lips move; no one could hear the words that without doubt were said, "I baptize thee." But the raised hand, the flow of water, were plainly visible.

Then the missioner was seen to falter. The arm that would have struck out again was exhausted, and the stream was very strong. It may have been that a sudden panic seized the newly-baptized Christian, for he seemed to clutch his rescuer, and both heads disappeared. If, a little later, they rose again, no one saw them, for all this, it must be remembered, took much less time to happen than to tell. Only a day or two later, far away down the river, two dead bodies were cast ashore. One was a Chinese workman with nothing to distinguish him from hundreds of his compatriots; the other was a European, a Christian and a priest. Father Wenceslaus van Ruyteghem was a hero at last.

THE BELOVED FATHER OF KA-WEI-SE

IT was what we should call a hut — mud-walled, grass-roofed — but to the Christians of Ka-Wei-Se it was the Holy of Holies, for there every morning the Son of God offered Himself in sacrifice to His Father for man. Poor and bare, with decorations that were tawdry to our way of thinking, it was the ante-room of heaven to the child, Malia. There she knelt daily, to assist at Mass and to receive into her heart her Savior and King; there in secret she begged God to accept her, when the time should come, as His spouse, and to make clear the way of her entrance into the congregation of the Virgins of Purgatory, that Chinese community in which so many of her countrywomen dedicate their lives to the service of God.

As yet, Malia was only a child, and she had not spoken of this wish even to Sister Magdalen, much less to the beloved Father who daily gave her her heart's joy in Holy Communion. But possibly one or the other had guessed it, or at least hoped it, for both knew that the child had a pure and innocent mind and more than a child's understanding of spiritual things.

Every morning the beloved Father came to the mud-walled chapel. It was chiefly the cast of his features that distinguished him from his congregation, for his white skin was tanned to a deep bronze, and like his parishioners he wore the ordinary Chinese garb. Yet his heart under his blue gown was French, and when the great European war broke out and France called on all her scattered sons to rally to her flag, Père Benoit was amongst the first to answer the call. The struggle between two

duties was hard, but law as well as patriotism pointed the way to France, and amidst the tears of his people, with his own eyes not quite dry, the priest started off on his long, long journey to report at his regimental headquarters in Lorraine.

“Will he come back?” the people of Ka-Wei-Se asked each other mournfully. “Shall we ever see our beloved Father again?”

It was only little Malia who varied this sorrowful questioning, for she said: “Certainly he will come back.”

To her, as to the Sisters at the convent, the absence of the beloved Father was a spiritual privation. Every morning the little girl attended the catechism class; every evening when the nuns gathered for prayer in the little chapel, empty now of its Heavenly Guest, Malia followed them, and prayed, too. As often as was possible a missionary from the next station journeyed to Ka-Wei-Se and said Mass in the grass-roofed hut, and every time this happened Malia was of the congregation, and every time she prayed for the beloved Father, saying without any question: “He will come back.”

It took months for any news from the war zone to reach that far-off corner of the mission-field, but when news came, with awful details of warfare in the trenches, the prayers of the Christians for their beloved Father were redoubled. Again rose their wailing, questioning cry: “Will he come back? Shall we ever see him again?” And again little Malia’s words were different and she whispered below her breath: “He will come back.”

And certainly away in the fighting line it seemed as though this bronzed and bearded soldier priest bore a charmed life. When his company was decimated he alone remained untouched. When two men beside him in a dug-out were blown to pieces, he escaped unhurt. Once a bullet pierced his tunic, grazing him harmlessly as it passed; twice his helmet was shot off his head. For two days and two nights he lay buried

under the débris of a shell-wrecked trench, and though others succumbed he seemed little the worse for the hardship. However, this last accident earned for him a time of rest in a less dangerous post, and he was able to send a full account of his adventures to Ka-Wei-Se.

So the months passed by and the years, but the beloved Father was not forgotten; rather, as his people learned more of the horrors and dangers of the wars of the West, their prayers were increased.

The child Malia was growing into a big girl, and long since she had revealed her heart's desire to Sister Magdalen. The latter promised to help her all she could and bade her tell the missionary who came occasionally to administer the Sacraments at Ka-Wei-Se, of her wish to be a nun. But before she was able to put this advice in practice, came a doubt to Malia as to whether, after all, it was through the Congregation of the Virgins of Purgatory that the call of God was coming to her. She fell ill — very ill — with a burning and wasting fever, and when at last the priest came on one of his periodic visits, it was not exactly what Sister Magdalen suggested that the little girl asked.

“Father,” she said, “I am ill and I wish to ask you something. I know that I am very ill, that they do not think I shall ever be well again, but I do not mind. If God calls me to Him in this way it is even better than the call I thought I heard. What I wish to ask is, may I offer my life to God for the beloved Father, that he may be brought safely through the War, back to this place where he is loved so well?” And the priest, knowing that death had already laid its seal on Malia, gave approval.

The Sisters, knowing nothing of this heavenly bargain, brought remedies to Malia. Quinine and various mixtures she swallowed obediently, and yet she grew no better. Only when news came that the Armistice was signed, and that Father



THE BELOVED FATHER

"His white skin was tanned to a deep bronze, and like his parishioners he wore the ordinary Chinese garb." (Page 174)

Benoit was to be amongst the first class demobilized — and for him, demobilization meant a return to Ka-Wei-Se — Sister Magdalen saw a more than earthly happiness on the little worn face.

“He is coming back,” the child whispered, “the beloved Father is coming back, and I — I have done my life’s work, and the Great King is taking me home.”

Sister Magdalen, not understanding, asked for further enlightenment; but Malia shook her head.

“When I die, the strange Father will come to bury me,” was all she said. “Tell him.”

And truly, after a short time little Malia passed quietly, in her sleep, to the home of the King of Heaven. From the priest who came to bury her, Sister Magdalen learned of the offering she had made to God, in return for the safety of the beloved Father, and the last words, except those of prayer, which she had heard from the dying childish lips were made clear to her:

“The beloved Father is coming home. Tell him, when he comes, that when I get to Heaven I will still pray for him there.”

Père Benoit was on the sea when this message, and the other missionary’s account of Malia’s death, reached him. “Surely,” he thought to himself, “Almighty God sends great consolations to us missionaries! Such devotion as this makes up for many hardships and long exile.”

THE MISSION FLAG

FATHER FERDINAND had not been long in the missions of Indo-China, and the difficulties of the life were intensified by the lack of ability to express himself in a language intelligible to his flock. The possibilities of accomplishing much good were so remote while it was necessary to employ an interpreter to convey his thoughts to the natives, and the work of struggling through confessions and giving instructions seemed discouragingly uphill.

It was while visiting the outlying stations that this difficulty was most apparent. At the central Mission, the people at least understood the language that the new missioner was trying to acquire; but in every country district there was an individual dialect, and no two seemed to be alike. The young priest, anxious to see results from his labors, found it hard not to yield to despondency.

But consolations were in store for him. One long journey which the Mission Superior asked him to make lay through a region largely covered with forest. This made the journey physically more trying, and as the natives lived in small clearings, containing no more than a half-dozen huts each, and these clearings were widely scattered, it seemed as though winter would come before the task of visiting all the groups could be accomplished. But the catechist, who accompanied the priest and acted as interpreter, knew better than that.

It was the catechist who, at the end of the first day's journey, directed the little band where to spend the night. Father Ferdinand soon learned that one of the reasons for his choice of a spot was the presence of very tall trees. The catechist opened a bundle and displayed a number of white

flags marked with a black cross. Then he instructed one of the native carriers to climb the tallest tree and hang out the flag. This, he explained, was a Mission Flag, and would announce the fact that a priest was present and that Mass would be said the following morning. The natives are so quick to notice any change in nature, that a flag hung in the tall trees was certain to catch the eye of any living within sight, — and the sight of these children of the forest was phenomenally keen.

Beyond the woodland where Father Ferdinand and his companions passed the night, was an expanse of water so wide that he could not judge whether it was a river or an arm of the sea. The chill of an autumn dawn was in the air and daylight was only beginning to creep over land and water, when Father Ferdinand, on his knees before the crucifix which had been set up in the place where, in a short time, he would offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, noticed something moving through the waters of the river. The movement was not unlike that made by great shoals of herring or mackerel when on the move in more westerly seas, and, unused as he was to the phenomena of Eastern nature, the priest forgot his prayers in watching the slow forward movement of the waters a mile or more from the banks. So steady was it, the movement, and so peculiar, that the priest studied it with glasses. These showed him what looked like swarms of brown balls, smooth and shiny, rising and falling rhythmically as the waters rose and fell. Then he called for his catechist, who after the labors of the previous days was not yet awake.

“They are the heads of men,” cried the catechist after studying the water. “See, the hands of men are becoming more and more visible. And those long dark things in the water are trunks of trees — the natives in these parts use them as rafts when they want to cross the river — rafts where-with to uphold the weak.”

"But men!" exclaimed the priest. "What are men doing out there? Why, the stream must be at least a mile broad, to judge by the look of the rice fields on the opposite shore."

"The water in this place is two miles wide. But the eyes of the people here can span a two-mile space, and, having seen the Mission Flag, they come in the only way they can. They are like the fish, the people of these parts," he added in explanation.

Father Ferdinand looked up to where the catechist pointed, and on the high trees above his head he saw the white, cross-marked flag that announced the presence of a priest — himself — and consequently, of Mass.

Consulting his predecessor's book, he saw that two miles across the river, on a height which corresponded more or less with that on which he himself was encamped, there was a settlement of Christians. Just a year ago the missioner whose place Father Ferdinand had taken had penetrated to this settlement, and the result of his teaching had been that the whole clan had embraced Christianity. A catechist had been left with them, and the Mission Superior had intended sending a priest when time permitted.

But this was not enough for these amphibious Christians. The Mission Flag had announced that a priest was within reach, and that Mass was about to be said, in a place to which a two-mile swim would take them. Another two-mile swim would be required to take them back to their homes again, but that did not matter. They had come.

The landing place was not of the best, and as may be imagined, the clothing of the swimmers was almost negligible. But at last practically the whole clan was landed on the shore, below the place where Mass was about to be said. Old men, middle-aged men, young men and even children, girls and young women, and some not even middle-aged, had braved the passage of the deep water of the river, and the fatigue of the long swim, in order to be present at the Holy Sacrifice.

Never, since the young missioner's arrival in the missions, had he experienced such a glow of fervor as this act of faith on the part of these converts enkindled in him this morning. It was truly an inspiring experience to stand under the great tree beneath the canopy of heaven and call down the Real Presence of the Son of God to bless these fervent disciples of His. The rows and rows of shining bodies were clad now in thin blue gowns which they had carried on their heads while swimming. No sign of weariness showed in faces or figures; only a great happiness was theirs that they were able to enjoy the privilege which their two-mile swim had procured — a privilege which some of us at home will hardly cross the street to enjoy.

Later came the question of confession. Not one of those who had traveled so far, wished to return without having received their Lord in Holy Communion. The missioner did not feel prepared to hear the confessions, but the catechist had foreseen the difficulty. Being a man of resource, he had, during the months that elapsed since his period of training at the central Mission, prepared a translation into his own dialect of the examination of conscience. As he himself truly, if crudely, put it, he had made a list of "the sins we may all have committed." And so, by the help of this list, and with many a prayer to the Holy Ghost for light and guidance, the priest spent the day in hearing confessions, and on the following morning he had the happiness of giving Holy Communion to the whole clan.

Afterwards, when his guests were ready to depart, Father Ferdinand tried, with the help of the interpreter, to congratulate them on their faith and on the feat they had accomplished. But the leader of the expedition would listen to no praise, for himself or his people.

"A four-mile swim? That is not so very much!" he said. "For a whole year we have been waiting for this opportunity. For you see, Father, it is the Mass that matters."

THE REPARATION OF DAHN

WHEN Sister Felicity was preparing the children of Ha-dua for their First Communion, she had reminded them that the day on which they would receive Our Lord for the first time should be the happiest of their lives. And yet upon the great day itself the Sister found little Dahn in tears. Certainly it was a time of fear and sorrow for the Christians of Annam, for the persecution of Tu-duc was bringing ruin upon the Christian communities and a martyr's death to many. But Sister Felicity soon learned that the tears of Dahn were not caused by fear. As a great secret, the little girl confided her trouble to the nun.

The place where Dahn and her parents lived was called Bin-cang, and the family of the governor of Ha-dua came from the same locality. The latter were people of much greater importance than were Dahn's family, who were very poor and ignorant and professed Christianity. The brother of the governor had been a person of importance in the little Catholic community, and it had caused both excitement and regret when he apostatized. Tu-duc had threatened that all pagan officials who did not insist upon every member of their family worshipping the idol, should lose their posts, whilst the recalcitrant member would be tortured and put to death; and under the pressure of these threats, emphasized by strong fraternal influence, the man had turned renegade. Dahn had heard the news at the time, but to-day a fuller understanding had come to her ten-year-old mind, and in the enjoyment of the happiness of Our Lord's presence she had suddenly realized what an awful thing it is for one who has believed in

the real presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament to apostatize and deny Him.

Very carefully Sister Felicity explained to the little girl the doctrine of reparation. As Dahn heard how one loving heart can atone to Our Lord for what even an apostate makes Him suffer, her tears dried and, with gleaming eyes, she declared that, to atone for the apostasy of the governor's brother, she would offer her life to Jesus, Who had visited her that day.

And the child did not forget her offering. The persecution of the Christians continued till its horrors reached as far as Bin-cang. The parents of Dahn, poor and insignificant though they were, were thrown into prison, because they would not deny their Faith. Both their children, Dahn and an elder sister, were imprisoned, too, and the sufferings of all were greatly increased because in Annam prisoners are supposed to supply their own food. When, as in this case, there is no one outside to help, the poor prisoners have nothing to eat except what is given to them in charity, so that hunger was often added to the pains of captivity. The sufferings of Dahn's family were very great. Weak, ill, hungry, they, with other Christians, were taken from the prison, now and then, and brought before a mandarin, who questioned them as to their willingness to worship the idol. Those Christians who refused were scourged, until many lost consciousness in their agony, and some, alas! yielded. But never Dahn.

The chief mandarin of the district, by name Bo-do-Thin, was especially exasperated that a child, a girl of only thirteen years, like Dahn, should resist him so bravely. The sight of her standing before him, either silent when he questioned her, or answering fearlessly that nothing would ever make her deny Christ, seemed to drive him into a passion of fury. Again and again, he gave orders that she should be scourged until the blood came, then questioned again. When her answers never

varied, the mandarin's rage made him break all bounds and the torrent of abuse that he poured out upon the Christians and their Faith was horrible.

All at once, a man who had been one of the crowd watching and applauding the hideous cruelties, sprang to his feet, and going out to where Dahn stood, or rather crouched, at the feet of her barbarous assailants, faced Thin and the other mandarins. It was the governor's brother.

"What is this court you are holding?" he cried. "How can a child of such tender years be any danger to the State or to its idols? If there is a man amongst you"—and he turned to those of lower rank—"surely you can see that Thin is a coward? Who but a coward wages war on children? How would he act, I ask you, if he was threatened with the scourges that this child has borne? Yes!"—and now with finger of scorn upraised, he pointed at the mandarin Thin himself—"you are a brave man, here, surrounded by your guards; you are brave enough to take the life of a martyr-child, but tell me what you would do if French ships appeared in the port to-morrow and a cannon ball or two struck the walls of this infamous court? I can tell you what you would do. You would hide your miserable body away and sneak off into the caves or on to the mountains, until all danger was past."

Thin, his voice trembling with fury, asked but one question in answer to this tirade:

"Are you a Christian?" he said.

And to the amazement of all, who knew of the apostasy of the brother of the governor, the answer came:

"I am. God forgive me, I am."

In the uproar that followed, little Dahn was for the time forgotten and, unnoticed, she joined the other prisoners, but she knew herself that no rescue was for her. Her heart was filled with joy because Almighty God had accepted the offer-



A SCENE IN INDO-CHINA

Preparing the grain after harvest. All members of the family are interested providers.

ing she had made of her life. The apostate had repented, and publicly had upheld the truth.

If ever there was murder on a human face, it was on the face of Thin, as he stood before his accuser. But his was the power of revenge, and in a voice that passion made clear though low, he bade one of the attendant soldiers strip his sword.

“Christian dog,” he cried, addressing the repentant apostate, “words are but little; acts can make for life and death, and as a Christian dog, you die.”

The “Christian dog,” with perfect calm, made the sign of the Cross, and bowed his head. “May God forgive my sins,” he said, and the next moment the naked sword-blade fell, and the soul of one more martyr of Annam went to God.

But, however powerful a local mandarin may be, it is forbidden to him to take life without a direct order from the court, and Bo-do-Thin had allowed his anger to outstrip his discretion. When the report of the impromptu beheading reached the higher powers, an order came back immediately that the mandarin be degraded and sent to join the troops in Cochin China, where the French were defending their territory.

The martyr had gauged the courage of the murderer correctly. Accompanied by the guard which had been sent to fetch him, he was taken to Ba-ria and placed at once in the forefront of the fight. Had it been possible, gladly would he have followed the suggestion of his victim and fled to the mountains. Possibly he even tried to do so, for when the brief encounter was over, his body was found with a bullet through the back of his head.

THE MARTYRDOM OF DAHN

(A child-martyr of Annam in 1867)

THE whole Nen family were Christians — father mother, and two little girls. They were poor, hard-working, earnest people. Dahn was the youngest, but she had a firmer grasp of Christianity than the others.

When the news was brought to Bin-cang that Tu-duc was persecuting the Christians, the Nen family prayed daily for strength to resist if the persecutors came their way. Only Dahn's prayer was a little different from the others. She prayed that she might have the strength of resistance, but she added, "because, dear God, I wish to be a martyr."

Before long, the Nens had need of all the courage and fortitude for which they had prayed. With other Christians, they were seized and cast into prison. When questioned, father, mother, and daughters answered bravely that there was but one true God, and that they belonged to His Church, which His Son had come to earth to found.

Dahn, being so young, was noticed among the prisoners, and the authorities, thinking that such a child would be easy to pervert, did everything possible to make her apostatize. In prison, the officials tried persuasion. When she was taken to the court, her resistance seemed to enrage the judges more than did that of her companions, and her cruel scourgings were proportionately heavier.

"Worship our gods, obstinate little pig that you are!" the mandarins cried in a fury. "Who are you, to put yourself against the worshipful mandarins?"

When Dahn still refused to obey, she was beaten with rods, until the blood came, and even until she lost consciousness. But never would she open her lips, except to say: "I will not apostatize! You may kill me, if you wish, but I will never deny God!"

"How can you bear such scourgings, child?" asked a fellow-prisoner once.

"When they scourge me," Dahn replied quite simply, "I just try to think of Our Lord, and I say the prayer, 'Lord, give me strength and courage,'" — this was a long prayer which all the persecuted Christians said every day — "and when I have finished it, well, I begin all over again."

For two long terrible years the Nen family bore their persecution. But even suffering loses its first appeal to our pity, and the friends who, during the earlier part of the captivity, had kept the Nens supplied with food, began to neglect them. At last Dahn's poor mother and sister succumbed to hunger and torture and in their weakness they denied with their lips the God for Whom they had endured so much. Thus they two were free to go home and find what food they could, in their long-neglected fields.

After this, Dahn and her father no longer had to endure such hunger, but the little girl would gladly have continued the days of starvation, if only her mother and sister had remained true.

In addition to better food, the prisoners soon knew another comfort. The cruel Thin was removed from power, and in his place a quiet, kindly man, named Fom-han, was appointed. Fom did not dare to free the prisoners, but he ordered that their scourgings and other tortures should cease. A few months under this lenient rule made the prisoners quite strong again, but their good fortune was only temporary. In his turn, Fom was superseded by the mandarin Thong. And the methods of the unspeakable Thin had been merciful compared to those

of Thong. Thong put the prisoners to such frightful tortures that many more apostatized, and among them was Dahn's father.

"I have borne all I could," Nen said to his little daughter. "I can bear no more. Surely God will forgive me, for I have no strength left."

"Oh, Father," cried Dahn, "think of all you have suffered! Are those three terrible years to be lost? Surely it is better to die than to deny God and go free. After all, if you go home, you will die there —"

But Nen's spirit was broken. He could not face another orgy of cruelty such as he had recently undergone. The next time he was taken before the mandarin, he denied his Lord and was set free. But when he would have bidden good-by to Dahn, she turned her face away.

"You have denied our dear Lord," she said sadly. "I am ashamed to call you father. Go, and may God have mercy on you!"

Now that the child of thirteen was alone in her resistance, Thong was determined to break her to his will. The brutalities he ordered inflicted were so atrocious that she was carried back to her cell unconscious and streaming with blood. A second day she was taken out and tortured again, until her tormentors thought she was dead. Then her broken body was thrown in a corner of the prison yard. But one of the other prisoners rescued it, took it back to the miserable prison bed, and tended its wounds so carefully that Dahn recovered consciousness.

She had earned her martyr's crown, however, and was not destined to leave her bed for the torture chamber again. For two weeks she lay in her cell, a victim of pains that increased daily. There were no remedies in the prison, and all that her fellow-Christians could do was to wash her wounds with the water that was allowed them for drinking, and thus stem a

little the ravages of the horrible worms which her undressed wounds produced and which were actually eating her away. At last came the merciful Angel of Death, to the little maid who had not murmured during the final weeks of agony, any more than under the scourgings and other tortures.

After fifty years, the courts of Rome have recognized the sufferings and death of Dahn as martyrdom. And now, since May 1924, we can say, in obedience to Rome: "Dear little martyred Annamite saint, Dahn, pray for us!"

A CHINA MISSIONER

THE good ship *Saint Germain* had left the harbor at St. Nazaire, en route for the Far East, and was rapidly gaining the open sea. Her decks were covered with passengers all bound for different parts of the globe. There were tourists traveling to see the world; soldiers going to join their regiments at Tongking; invalids seeking vainly in southern climes for the health that was denied them at home. Then, too, there were married couples, on their honeymoons, wrapt up in each other. There were young men going to look for employment; there were wives going to join their husbands in far-off countries where their duties had sent them; and last but not least, nay rather first of all, there was a Franciscan Friar voluntarily exiling himself from his native country and willing to face dangers and death in spreading the Gospel of Christ amongst the heathen.

Soon the waves of the Bay of Biscay began to make themselves felt, and for two days the passengers saw but little of each other; but as they neared the coast of Spain, they left their cabins, and began to repeople the decks.

The children were the first to recover. The morning that they were due to arrive at Santander a whole group of them were playing noisily together. Little Cecile was going to leave the ship that day, and she had persuaded her mother to let her take her beautiful new doll on deck to show it to her companions. It had been her grandmother's parting gift, and certainly was a very queen amongst dolls. Its flaxen curls were nearly as long and as silky as those of its six-year-old mama; its blue eyes, smiling cherry lips, and complexion of milk and roses were quite beyond description. And its garments! — a

pale pink silk frock, covered with loops of narrow pink ribbon and lace, openwork stockings with little bronze shoes, embroidery galore, and a bonnet that could have been made only by the fingers of a Paris milliner.

No wonder this beautiful creature caused quite a sensation amongst the childish passengers of the *Saint Germain*, and many envious glances were cast upon her! At last one little girl could contain herself no longer.

“ You are very unkind, Cecile,” she said. “ If I had a lovely baby like yours I would take more care of her than that. Fancy bringing the poor child out in her party dress; she will catch her death of cold! ”

The indignant little mother pressed her lips on her darling’s cheek before replying, and found that the words were quite true; the baby certainly was very cold. It so happened that Father Anselm had thrown down his cloak on a bench as he paced up and down saying his office, and Cecile’s eye fell upon it. The hood alone would have held half a dozen dolls, and quick as thought the little girl laid her baby in it.

“ Stay there, my love,” she whispered, “ and I will come and fetch you when you are quite warm.”

But the ship was nearing port, and in the excitement of disembarking and seeing her father again, Cecile forgot everything else. It was only when the little boat had pushed off from the steamer that the child remembered her doll; and whilst the smiling beauty slept on undisturbed in the Friar’s brown hood, a bereaved, unhappy little mother landed at Santander. When night came Father Anselm gathered up the cloak carelessly, and laid it in his cabin. Every day the sun grew warmer, and it was only weeks and weeks after, when he in his turn was about to leave the ship, that the neglected doll was discovered. Cecile’s companions immediately identified her treasure, and the priest promised to return it to its sorrowing owner on the first opportunity.

Once landed in China, there were so many things for the good priest to think of that for the second time the doll was forgotten. His new station was far away inland. For hundreds and hundreds of miles the smart little Parisian traveled, packed away in a corner of the missioner's humble luggage, right into the heart of that great unknown country. No priest had before penetrated to the spot where Father Anselm's work now lay, and the outlook before him was discouraging in the extreme. Unlike many of the natives of China, the people of that locality, although not actually hostile, resented the slightest interference, and, as the Christian family who had begged for a priest to come to them had left the place before Father Anselm was able to get there, he felt almost in despair of ever gaining the souls around him.

So uncertain did he feel of being able to remain that he did not even unpack all of his few possessions, but lived from hand to mouth in the rude hut he was allowed to occupy. One night, some time after his arrival, worn out and almost hopeless, he came upon the doll that, in remembrance of its little mistress, he called Cecile.

It was then that the China missioner began her good work. For the first time for weeks a smile crept over the lonely priest's features. The simpering dolly was a sort of link with home and civilization, and what a contrast she was to the little yellow babies round him! He took her in his hand, and as he did so an idea struck him; a ray of hope had come to cheer him, and he lay down on his hard pallet that night with a lighter heart than he had since his arrival in China. Cecile had shown him the silver lining to his cloud.

Early next morning the missioner made his appearance in the village, and on his arm Cecile was proudly seated. As he passed the open doorways, one yellow face peeped out after another, and before he had gone many hundred yards, the children, who up to this had hidden at his approach, were



BLOSSOMS IN A GARDEN OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

"She could buy real live babies in China, who would be brought up as Christians;" (Page 193)

crowding around him, lost in admiration of the pink-and-white beauty. The plan had succeeded, and by nightfall he felt that, with Cecile's help, he had made a small but certain beginning to the mission. Once he had gained the children's confidence he felt sure that the mothers would not stand against him for long, and in China, in an even stronger way than elsewhere, the whole household depends upon the woman.

He was quite right.

Before many months had passed, his catechism class had grown to such an extent that he had to send for nuns to help him in his work. And when they came, Cecile was given a place of honor in the new schoolroom, for the greatest reward the Chinese children could have was to be allowed to kiss the pink cheeks and smooth the golden ringlets.

And the real Cecile, what of her? One day when she had quite given up all hope of ever seeing her child again, a packet arrived at the French consulate at Santander, containing, not indeed her long-lost darling, but a Chinese figure, made and dressed by the nuns, and with it was an account of the adventures of the China missioner.

In reading this the heart-broken little mother was quite consoled, and it would have taken a great many hoods to hold all the dolls and toys that she wished to send out to keep her namesake company. But her mother explained to her that instead of buying dolls at home she could buy real live babies in China, who would be brought up as Christians and taught in the school in which the Chinese Cecile lived.

So the little French Cecile saved her money, and begged from her friends, until she had ten dollars to send to the nuns to buy a baby. Every year she collects ten dollars to pay for her baby in the orphanage; and she even says that, when she grows up, she means to go out herself and see her doll again, and help to look after the babies that Chinese mothers have deserted.

LITTLE LADY LOU

LITTLE Pen-se opened her brown almond-shaped eyes, and stretched her small yellow hands above her head. It was no wonder that she was awakened, for there was such a quacking going on outside the little bedroom where she and her family slept that the marvel was that anyone could remain asleep. But only Pen-se awoke. The others paid no attention to the ducks, because it was not part of their day's work to look after them. Pen-se helped her father to do this, and every morning, almost as soon as it was light, her task began by letting her charges out into the river.

This little Chinese girl, instead of living in a house on land, had her home in a square flat-bottomed boat that swung lazily on the tide of the Pearl River, and the ducks' bedroom was built of bamboo against the side of this boat, just above the high-water mark. As soon as the door of this sleeping apartment was opened, the big drake, of which Pen-se was a little afraid, pushed his way into the water with a splash, and all the ducks followed him, tumbling out together, and swam away to find their day's feeding, only to come home again when Pen-se called shrilly for them at night. The house-boat, belonging to Pen-se's father, was one of a veritable fleet of boats, large and small. Some of them were already moving about as the little girl looked out across the river; others were still at anchor. But everyone's ducks were clamoring for liberty, and flocks of the noisy creatures were being freed and were swimming in ever-increasing numbers towards the shore.

Whole families of Chinese lived in the boats, but it was curious to note that, as the inhabitants of the bamboo cabins began

to swarm out on the decks, very few little girls were to be seen compared to the number of boys. The sad explanation of this fact could have been learnt by anyone who sailed down the river at night, or in the early morning. When all else was quiet, it was nothing uncommon to hear a splash at the side of one of the house-boats, and maybe a feeble cry. Then, when daylight broke, a small bundle caught in the grasses that grow along the riverside would attract attention, and if the stranger drew nearer to it he would see the dead body of a tiny infant — one of the many hundred baby girls, gifts of God, unwanted by their heathen parents, and so thrown with a careless hand into a watery grave.

Pen-se, as a baby, had run no risks of sharing such a fate, because her parents were Christians; and, although the days of the week, even for the children, were filled with toil, the little girl and her brother Liu spent every Sunday at the Sisters' school, in the convent on the shore. They were both so bright and eager to learn, that week after week they added to their store of knowledge without forgetting anything that they had been taught before.

Kang-lo, the head of this little Christian household, was a fisherman, and what he and the boy Liu caught in the river with the help of their cormorants, little Pen-se and her mother, Faw, sold in the city markets and at the houses of the rich merchants who lived in beautiful villas high up above the business parts of the town. Pen-se had sometimes gone alone with Liu to the market, but she had never gone without her mother to the houses on the hill; and when, on the morning that she had got up so early to let out the ducks, she found that Faw was ill and that she would have to go by herself to all their customers, she felt proud and pleased, yet at the same time a little frightened of what she had to do.

There was a whole street in the town where nothing but food was sold, and here, in her mother's usual place, the child

managed to sell all the coarse fish she had. As soon as the big basket that Liu had carried up from the river for her was empty, she took the smaller basket which contained the merchants' supply and turned from the little crowded alleys of the town to the big houses, surrounded by gardens, that formed a suburb to the city.

In one of these houses lived a little girl who was not much bigger than Pen-se, although she was two or three years older. The life that she led was very different from that of the little fisher-girl. In the first place, her parents were heathen, so before the baby Lou was able to walk her feet had begun to be bound so tightly that they could not grow, and instead of running about and playing like other children, Lou could only hobble round the garden and through the rooms of her father's house. She had never been out in the streets; all her life had been passed inside the walls of her home. Sometimes her mother was carried in a closed box-chair to pay visits to other ladies, but until Lou grew up and married there was no reason why she should ever go out.

The first time that Pen-se saw little Lady Lou she thought her very much to be envied. It was a dreadfully hot day, and the baskets of fish that Pen-se carried were heavy for such young shoulders. They were slung one at each end of a long pole, and in going up the steep steps leading to the rich men's houses they had kept swinging downwards until their poor little bearer was hot and weary.

Lou's house was one of the last Pen-se had to visit; and when the cook, seeing her tired face, told her to sit and rest in the shady courtyard, where the fountain splashed and dripped so coolly, the fisher-girl was glad to squat down on her heels and wait for her baskets to be emptied, away in the kitchen. There were flowers, bright and gay, around her, and in the basins where the fountains played shoals of gold and silver and beautifully mottled fish swam and jumped, glittering in

the sunlight as they rose and then disappeared again under the water. On the walls were hanging cages filled with bright-colored birds; and stately peacocks, white and blue, swept the court with their gaudy plumes, and then strutted out into the garden beyond.

Pen-se gazed on all these beautiful things with wondering eyes. It was a veritable fairyland to her; and when there appeared amongst the peacocks a little figure with roses in her hair and dressed in a lovely embroidered coat, with full silken trousers, and tiny slippers barely three inches long and worked with gold thread, Pen-se hardly thought that it was a human child.

“Who are you?” said the little newcomer, stopping short, almost as much amazed at seeing Pen-se as Pen-se was at seeing her.

“I am Pen-se,” replied the fisher-girl; “and are you the fairy of the garden?”

“Oh no!” said the child with a very natural human laugh; “I am only little Lady Lou.”

“And do you always live in this beautiful garden?” questioned Pen-se, in awestruck tones.

“Yes,” replied Lady Lou; “and it is so stupid here! There is nothing to do, and no one to play with. Where do you live, fisher-girl?”

“I live down there,” and Pen-se pointed to where the river gleamed far below them.

“On the river? Show me just where,” said Lady Lou.

Pen-se got up off the floor and walked across to the garden wall, but, finding that Lou was not beside her, she turned and saw the little much-bedecked figure hobbling painfully after her.

“Why do you bind up your feet so that you can’t walk?” she asked.

“Everyone does,” replied Lady Lou. “Of course it would

not do for me to have big feet, but oh! I do envy you the way you walk."

Pen-se looked thoughtfully down at her own brown feet, protected to-day, because of the roughness of the city streets, by plain leather boots, and she wondered whether, after all, she was not better off than little Lady Lou, in spite of her beautiful clothes and garden and varied possessions.

Pen-se pointed out her home — one amongst the many boats that thronged the Whampoa, — and the little lady questioned her eagerly about the life she led. Pen-se told of her father and mother, of her brother Liu, of the ducks and the boats, and then quite simply she spoke of the Sisters and their classes and of the prayers and hymns that the children were taught.

Little Lady Lou, although her own life was so dull and monotonous, one would think, as to deaden all thought or understanding, listened eagerly to Pen-se's talk. She had never heard of Christians, never heard of our Lord, and the questions that she asked were pitiful in their ignorance. All too soon for the children, the cook came back with the empty baskets, but little Lady Lou would not let Pen-se go away until she had promised faithfully to come back again the very next time that there was fish to bring, and to stay as long as ever she was allowed.

That night, on the house-boat, Pen-se had so much to tell that the rest of the family had finished their supper whilst the little chatterer's bowl was still half full of boiled rice and tiny bits of the fried mice which Liu had caught along the river bank and brought home as a great treat for the evening meal. Faw listened with interest to her daughter's story. Christianity had widened the sympathy of her mother heart, and she yearned towards the little lonely lady, whose own mother seldom troubled herself about her, who was of no importance in the pagan household until she would be old enough to make a good marriage and thus increase her family's greatness.

"I may go again, Mother, please?" said Pen-se, holding to her mother's tunic.

"Yes, child," replied Faw. "It shall be your task hence-forward to carry fish to the house of the little lady's parents. But if you wish to help this lonely child to be happy, you must show her how to look beyond this world to the great Father whom the Sisters have taught us to know and to love."

Pen-se looked very serious as her mother spoke. In asking to go and see Lady Lou again, she had thought only of the pleasant garden and the pretty things. "Mother," she said at last, "I think I will go over in my mind all the catechism that the Sisters have taught me, and then I shall know how to do as you say."

The cook in the merchant's house had often pitied little Lady Lou as she saw her passing long, lonely days in the gardens; and when Pen-se came again with fish she told her to go into the courtyard and play a while with the little lady, as she had done before. She did not know that Pen-se was a Christian, but she could see that the child was innocent and that her little mistress could learn no harm from her.

So this chance friendship grew and strengthened, teaching much, as time went on, to both children. Lou learnt of life as the fisher-girl had seen it, and above all she learnt of Christianity and of the love of God for us. Pen-se was taught that, although she had to work hard and her clothes and food and home were poor compared with those of Lady Lou, yet in the rich man's house there were troubles which found no place in the duck-boat on the river. Sometimes the children wove together day-dreams of how Lou should get away from her home and go with Pen-se to the Sisters in the town, where the waters of baptism would be poured on her head and she would become by act, instead of by desire alone, a Christian. Childlike, however, they lived mostly in the present, peaceful and happy in

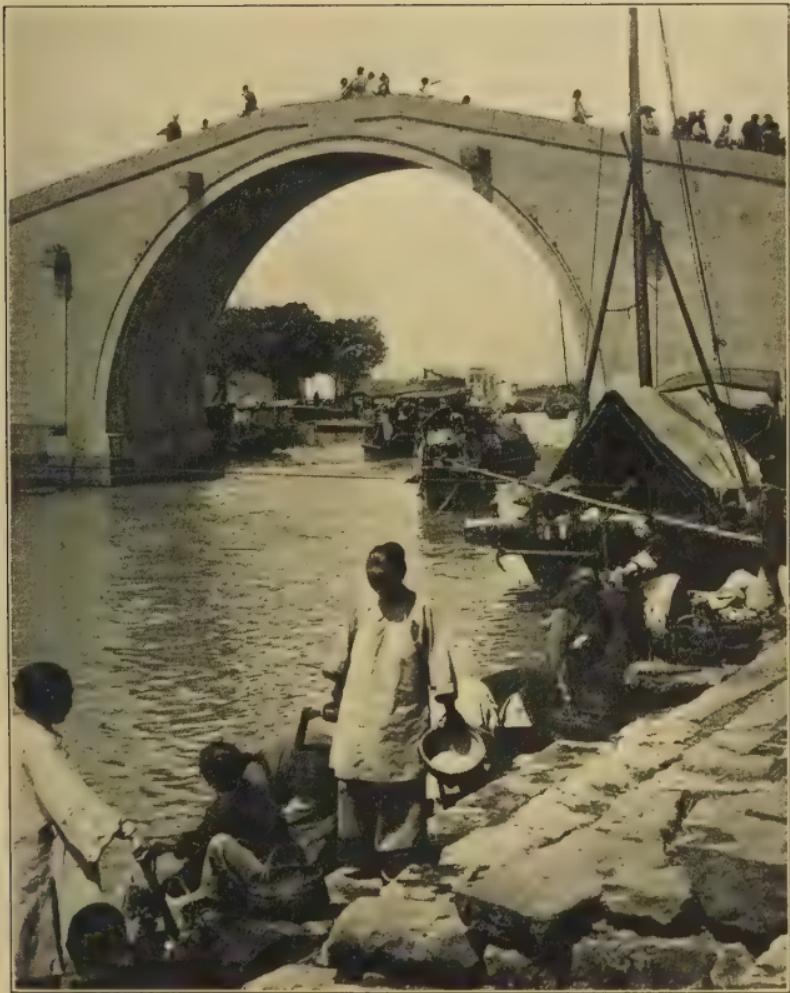
each other's company, and neither foresaw that anything was likely to come into their lives that would part them again.

One day, more than a year after their first meeting, Pen-se, coming with the fish, found Lou waiting for her as usual, but with hair so tossed, and eyes so red and swollen from weeping, as to be scarcely recognizable.

It was a sad story that she sobbed out to her friend — sad, but not uncommon in China. Lady Lou's father, in the eyes of the world a wealthy and prosperous merchant, was in reality a gambler, whose fortunes of to-day, doubled to-morrow, might on the third day all be lost. To keep up appearances in the eyes of the public, he had so far resisted staking his house or his business on the fatal game that swallowed up his time, his interests, and much of his wealth; but, coming to the end of all available resources, he had, in a moment of desperation, staked his little daughter Lou, and lost her to a gambler, a low, opium-soddened wretch, who was leaving Lou in her father's house only because he would not break in upon his run of luck to come and claim her. Any day, at any moment, however, he might make his appearance.

Pen-se found Lou in such a state of desperation that she was terrified at what might happen; for Lou, forgetting all the Christian teachings which she had learnt, vowed and protested that if she were forced to marry this man she would poison herself with opium at the first opportunity. She was barely fifteen, but she knew that many heathen girls no older than herself had done the same thing rather than endure the fate that was forced upon them, and all Pen-se's entreaties, all her appeals to think of God, were in vain.

One of the Sisters' works in China is that of finding suitable Christian husbands and wives for the girls and boys of the mission. Pen-se knew that unless her father himself found a Christian husband for her, she would be married to someone whom the nuns advised, and in her distress about her unhappy



A FAMILIAR SCENE ON CHINESE WATERWAYS

“Whole families of Chinese lived in the boats.” (Page 194)

little friend she went to the convent and told the Sisters all.

They had often heard of little Lady Lou from Pen-se, and had sent her messages and words of encouragement, but now it seemed as though the task of helping her was quite outside their sphere. "Ma Sœur" listened sadly to Pen-se's story. To advise the boys of the mission about their future wives was a very different thing from speaking to a rich young man on the same subject without being asked to do so.

But Pen-se was insistent. To her the powers of the Sisters for good had no limits, and truly it seemed as though, when the salvation of a soul was in question, there was nothing too difficult or too troublesome for the nuns to undertake.

There was a young man, a Christian merchant, who had often helped "Ma Sœur" in her good works, and now, in this sore need, she determined to apply to him again. Perhaps amongst his friends there might be some one who would be willing to buy the girl from the wretch whose property she had become. Pen-se's trust was not destined to be shaken. Chan-sen, the young merchant, on being sent for to the convent, listened to what "Ma Sœur" had to tell and promised to help her if he could.

The following evening, when the children of the orphan asylum were in bed and the Sisters were saying their last prayers for the night, a knock at the courtyard gate disturbed them. It was Chan-sen, and in his arms was a little bundled figure that the portress thought was another orphan seeking admittance to the home. It was not an orphan, but worse, far worse. It was Lou, who, having been claimed by the man to whom she had been sold by her father, had been purchased from him by Chan-sen for a few gold pieces, as, more dead than alive, she was being carried away from her father's house.

For days and weeks, Lou could not bear to let the Sisters out of her sight; though she shrank from seeing anyone else,

even Pen-se, the faithful little fisher-girl, who came every morning to ask news of her friend. Anything that brought back the past was hateful to her, and it was only Time, the great healer, that at last enabled her to think of the future which had to be faced.

As soon as Lou was in a condition to listen and understand, the Sisters began to speak to her of God. They found her so willing to believe, that her further instruction was carried on without much difficulty, and as soon as she was strong enough to go down to the chapel the priest gave her the sacrament of Baptism.

After a time it was thought wiser to send Lou away to the Sisters in another town. At home there was always the danger of her pagan father learning of her whereabouts and forcing her to return, either to him or to the gambler to whom he had sold her. The parting between the girls was a sad one, and they were destined never to meet again.

Pen-se's simple life went on the same as before she had known little Lady Lou, until the time came for her to marry and make her home in another house-boat down the river. A Christian girl from the Sisters' orphanage took her place in the old home, having married her brother Liu. On Sundays Pen-se and her husband go to Mass at the Sisters' chapel, and afterwards Pen-se often asks for news of Lou, who also is married to a young Christian. She is not as rich as she would have been, had she gone as a bride from her father's house; but instead of riches she has happiness, instead of slavery, the freedom that Christianity brings. Hers is one more life that the Sisters have been able to save from misery, one more soul that they have placed in the paths of salvation.

A CHILD BONZESS

HE was the greatest personage in the whole district, and his wife was the daughter of the Prefect. They were rich and powerful, and therefore it was thought that they should have been contented; but it was only people who did not stop to consider, who said this, for they had no son. They had been married some years, but their only child was a daughter, and in China it is a terrible thing, almost a disgrace, to have no heir to come after the father and to see that all the rites which are supposed by the pagans to ensure peace to the soul are carried out.

At last one day it occurred to them to promise to give their daughter to be a bonzess if a son were born to them, and before very long their wish was fulfilled and Tchan-Se was the happy mother of a boy baby. But by this time they had grown very fond of their little daughter, and when the bonzess-in-chief sent word to say that she expected the fulfilment of their promise, they excused themselves by saying that the little girl was too young yet to be sent away from home.

The next time that the same message came, they pleaded that their daughter was delicate and not as yet fit for the life of a bonzess; but when a third time the message arrived, and this time the words which were used to express the meaning of the bonzess held a menace, Tchan-Se and her husband no longer dared to ignore the demand. For a long time they consulted together as to how they could manage to evade their promise, and at length they decided to go to the temple and lay the whole case before the bonzess.

It is not the custom in China to say exactly what you mean at once, and a conversation such as that which took place be-

tween the bonzess and the great personages had to be gilded with such compliments and beautiful speeches that it was a long time before the real object of the visit came under discussion. Each time that the bonzess had sent for the little girl, she had received, with the excuses, presents both for herself and for her temple; and to-day, too, the child's parents had come laden with beautiful things, hoping thereby to appease either the gods or the priestess, they were not quite sure which.

The bonzess received the callers and was touched by their munificence, but she hinted that although she herself would be willing to forget the promise of dedication, there were powers which were not so easily put off; she also hinted at terrible calamities that she would be unable to avert, and which might fall not only upon the little girl but on her brother as well. This seemed finally to decide the child's fate, when suddenly an idea struck Tchan-Se, and she turned again to the bonzess.

"We have in our household," she said, "a girl who has been brought up with our own daughter, and who is, I must confess it, more beautiful, more intelligent, and more docile than she is. The destiny of this child is in our hands. She is in fact our slave; but having, as I say, been brought up with our children, she is much superior to her state. If we give you this girl, and undertake besides that to pay —" Here she referred to her husband, and he, after a moment's thought, mentioned a sum that was not to be despised, even by a bonzess. "Will you, under those conditions, consent to take the child Mou, in place of our daughter?"

The offer, as they knew, was a good one for the bonzess. The recipient would be at liberty to keep or to spend the money as she desired. The gods would be propitiated by the offering of the other girl, and besides a slave would probably be an easier subject to govern than the spoilt child of a rich man who entered the temple against her will.

After due consideration the bonzess consented, and the parents went on their way rejoicing. No one considered what the slave child herself might think of the bargain. After all, though she had been treated so well, as the companion and friend of the daughter of the house, she was in reality only a slave, and therefore she could be disposed of just as a rich man disposes of any piece of his property. Mou was at this time a big girl of twelve years old, and in China this is counted to be a grown-up age. Mou did not perhaps feel as grown-up as she would have done had she lived all her life in the streets, but the treatment she had always received had in other ways developed her intelligence, and when she was told what her fate was to be, she not only thoroughly understood, but she also thoroughly disapproved of it.

It was useless for her to cry and protest, and beg her little mistress to intercede with her mother for her. It was a choice between the two children, and Tchan-Se was certainly not going to sacrifice her own daughter for the fancies of a slave. There was nothing for it but to submit, and, worn out with tears and protests, the child was carried off and formally given over to the bonzess for the service of the temple.

Little Mou had dreaded the idea of becoming a bonzess, but the reality, she found, was in most ways far worse than she had expected. Knowing that she had been a slave, the others gave her all the hardest tasks to do; and when, from weakness or incompetence, these tasks were badly done, or sometimes not done at all, the poor little thing was beaten till her arms and back were black and blue. Her only joy was sometimes to creep to a corner of the temple, whence she could watch the happy children who were free to play in the streets and wander where they chose.

Day after day the poor little prisoner gazed on the world outside, and by degrees she began to know the children by sight. There were several who always passed together, and

took her fancy very much, and she tried to be at her look-out always at the same time, so that she should have a chance of seeing them. They were better-behaved than the others whom she saw, and there was something in their faces that she liked.

Then she found that they passed back the same way in the evenings, and after that she tried to be at the look-out twice a day, though she found the evenings more difficult to manage than the mornings, because then she was not supposed to be in the temple. In fact, she was forbidden to be there; but she had become so accustomed to be told how naughty she was, even when doing her best to be good, that now she had given up trying. As she was going to be scolded in any case, she thought she would please herself as much as she could.

One day Mou had been naughty, and had not really tried to do her tasks well, so the consequence was that she was beaten very hard. The next day she was so stiff and sore from the beating that, though she did try her very best, she could not sweep and dust as she was expected to do, and despite her bruises and her cries she was beaten even harder than before.

For a long time she had woven fancies about herself, in which she escaped from the bonzes and made her way to the home of the children whom she watched for, morning and evening, in the corner of the temple. This evening, however, Mou was too tired and too sore to be able to think of anything pleasant, and it was more to get away from everyone, than to look out as she usually did, that she crept into the temple. Finding herself alone, as she had hoped to be, she no longer tried to restrain her sobs. She never thought how near she was to the children outside, who were due to pass by now, but whose very existence she had forgotten for the moment.

When the sound of sobbing fell upon their ears they stopped and looked around, and finally decided that it must come from the little opening in the temple, above their heads.

“Who is there?” called the eldest one softly, standing on her toes to raise herself as much as possible. She wished to be heard by the child who was weeping — for they knew from the sound that it was a child — and yet not to attract the attention of the passers-by.

The second time that the question was repeated Mou heard what was said, and, sitting up, she peeped out into the street. Something had told her that her friends — for so she styled the unknown children — had come to her rescue.

“Oh, I’m so unhappy!” she replied, “and I’m beaten black and blue, and if I’m caught here I’ll be beaten worse again.”

What could the would-be comforters out in the street say to such a thing as this? For a moment even the big one was at a loss. Then another question broke the ice, and after that the story of the unwilling little bonzess was told to them in full.

Time was passing, and to escape another immediate beating, Mou soon had to go; but she did not leave her opening until the other children, or rather their spokeswoman, had promised to stop again when passing in the morning.

At this second visit it was the story of the outsiders that had to be told. They were on their way to school — that was the first piece of information they gave; but after that came stories of their school life, which were continued not only on that evening, but for many days to come. Even these few moments’ daily intercourse with other children, as a relaxation from the continual company and scoldings of the grim bonzesses, seemed to help little Mou to bear with her life more patiently. But what she heard about the wonderful school, from which her friends would not lose a day for any consideration, created in her poor little starved heart such a longing to share in its delights, that at length, driven

to desperation by a continued series of cruel beatings, she decided to run away.

It was a dreadful thing to do, and her friends outside were so good that she was afraid at first to mention it to them. But at last she made up her mind to do so, and then that very evening they told her that for a whole month they would not pass that way, because the school was giving them holidays. One or two promised to come and see her if they could; but as the days passed she found that they were too full of holiday-making to remember their promise, at least just yet. Deprived of her only comfort, and worn out from the beatings, she made up her mind at last to creep out at night, when all the world was dark, and climb up over the fence, to liberty.

The Sisters were not unaccustomed to children going to them for protection; but when little Mou came to their door, trembling, and marked from head to foot with all her beatings, they were at a loss to know what was best to do with her. Her shaved head showed that she had been admitted amongst the bonzes, that she was not only a little servant maid; and if it was discovered that she was at the convent, might it not bring danger upon the helpless inmates of their little hospital? — for the Christian religion was only just tolerated in the town.

But a little questioning made it apparent that it was not only protection the child asked; she wished to be a Christian. The children had told her what they were taught, they had repeated some of their prayers to her, and it looked as though our Lord Himself had taught the child to know Him, for it hardly seemed possible that the children's words alone could have enkindled such faith and love in her heart. She wanted to be a Christian, and to give up her life to the service of God, just as she had been forced to give it up to the service of the temple.

It happened that two Sisters were about to start for another



“Her only joy was sometimes to creep into a corner of the temple, whence she could watch the happy children who were free . . . to wander where they chose.” (Page 205)

convent down the river, and it was suggested that the child should be smuggled out of the town amongst their baggage. It would have been inhuman to have sent Mou back to the people who had not scrupled to ill-treat her so cruelly; and then, when the little thing was taken into the chapel, it was plain that to send her back to paganism would have been even more inhuman, when it was so evident that God Himself had given her the gift of faith.

The orphanage down the river was already filled to overflowing, and "*Ma Sœur*" did not know where the money to buy food was to come from in another week or two, unless kind people at home in Europe happened to remember her and her large family. Yet little Mou, having come so far and with the marks of her bruises still fresh upon her, could not be refused. A corner was found for her, and very soon she became not only at home and happy, but very useful in the school. From the day she had learnt of the existence of God, her resolution of dedicating herself to His service never wavered. Everything she did had this end in view, and there was no one more obedient, more docile, more in earnest than she. But she had many things to learn still, and for some years she must go on swelling the numbers for whom the nuns have to provide.

As for the bonzesses, they had inquiries made, and even her former master tried to find out what had happened to her; but as their only idea was that some of the child's own people had found her out, no suspicion fell on the convent. If, some day when little Mou has attained her wish, and is a real nun, she is sent back to the town where once she was a bonzess, there will be no danger of her secret being discovered; for it was reported that a child had died amongst her own people soon after her escape from the temple, and the bonzesses are quite sure that this child was Mou.

THE FIRST MISSIONER OF HAN-KIN

FATHER PIERRE was not only the priest of the mission at Lan-ho; he was also the most important person in that far-off Chinese village, where, owing to the holy old Frenchman's labors, the inhabitants were almost all Christians. The district which was under his care was many times larger than the largest diocese in this country, and he had to travel about in it, taking the sacraments to his scattered flock and baptizing those whom his faithful native teachers had instructed.

Great as were the labors that his own huge parish laid upon him, Father Pierre longed to extend them. On the northern bank of the river Han, whose waters separated it from the territory of Lan-ho, was a tract of land, densely populated, but upon which the priest, as a foreigner, was forbidden to enter. Wang-lo, the ruler of this state, had made this rule, and all Father Pierre's efforts to have it relaxed had so far been unavailing. The piteous stories, brought by native Christians of his own flock, of the sufferings that ignorance and paganism were inflicting upon helpless women and children, as well as the crying need of so many souls in that forbidden land, urged the priest to continue his efforts in spite of long-continued failure.

One day news came to Lan-ho that Fan-choo, wife of Wang-lo, was about to pass up the river on her homeward way, and it immediately occurred to Father Pierre that if he were to give a splendid reception to the lady, treating her with great respect, she might in return do something to lessen her husband's opposition to the progress of Christianity.

The preparations for a royal reception at Lan-ho were very unlike those of Western places. The landing-stage was decorated with quaint odds and ends of color, and fragrant herbs were strewn along the path leading to the schoolhouse. The bamboo walls of this building were hung with bunches of flowers and with pieces of embroidery borrowed from the chief houses of the village.

Besides the priest, there were but two Europeans in the district — one an engineer, the other a trader, who had with him his wife and little daughter. To Mollie Fanshawe the coming of a princess, even though she was a Chinese, was an event of great importance; and when shrieks and cries from the riverside announced the approach of the royal boat, the child implored her mother to allow her to take her lovely doll, Ena Alfonsine, to see the procession. This regally named personage was a Parisian to the tips of her fingers. Her waxen cheeks were as pink as paint could make them, her lashes as dark, her flaxen curls as brilliant; and as for her clothes, no one but a Frenchwoman could have turned out such dainty, much-befrilled garments.

Father Pierre, when conducting his visitor, with many bows and much complimentary Chinese, along the flowery way that led to the school, was surprised when his companion suddenly ordered her chairmen to stand still, and, utterly disregarding his carefully prepared speeches of welcome, turned from him and stretched out her hands, with a rapturous cry, to some one or some thing among the crowd of onlookers. Little Mollie Fanshawe was a noticeable figure in her white frock, standing near her blue-clad native nurse; but it was the doll that she carried in her arms which had taken the great lady's fancy.

"Who is that?" she cried, interrupting the priest, and pointing to the child.

They were great friends, the old French missioner and the

little English girl, and when Father Pierre put out his hand with a gentle "Come, Mollie," she went to him, half shyly, yet wholly pleased at such unexpected notice.

But it was the doll, not its owner, that Fan-choo wished to see.

"Who is this?" she asked, with bated breath, laying one finger on Ena Alfonsine's silken frills.

Father Pierre politely explained to the princess that this was not a person, but a doll, dressed in the latest Paris fashion. Then Mollie had to show off her treasure. Hat, hair, complexion, frock, shoes, all came in for their share of admiration, and it was with the greatest difficulty that at last Fan-choo was persuaded to go on her way to the schoolhouse, where music, more hearty than pleasing, awaited her.

Everything went off well. There was no doubt that the great lady's visit had been a success, and she was so gracious that Father Pierre was emboldened, before she left, to ask permission to return her visit when she was once more installed in her husband's capital. To this the princess agreed, stipulating only that the visit should not be paid until a formal permission came from Wang-lo, which permission, she assured Father Pierre, would be forwarded without delay.

Fan-choo was true to her word. In less than a week a special messenger came down the river to Lan-ho, and after years of waiting Father Pierre held in his hand the passport for which he had wished and striven so earnestly. Only, there was a condition attached to it: Father Pierre was permitted, nay, invited, to visit Han-kin; but to ensure a welcome he must bring with him no less a personage than the beautiful Ena Alfonsine. Fan-choo had completely lost her heart to Mollie's treasured doll, and to obtain possession of it she had induced her husband to grant Father Pierre's petition.

Mollie was only ten; hardly old enough to realize to the full all that depended on Father Pierre's being able to accede

to Wang-lo's request. It would be weeks and weeks before another doll could be ordered from Europe, months before it could come to her, and even when it did come it would never be Ena Alfonsine herself!

The good old priest wished the child to decide for herself. It was no small sacrifice that she was called upon to make. Before asking her to give up her doll the missioner explained to Mollie that through it alone he would be able to help many poor little Chinese girls whom nobody cared about, not even their own mothers; for the pagans in China think that at most two daughters are quite enough for any one to have, and if more come, many parents let them die of hunger, drown them, or leave them in the fields to perish when they are only a few days old. It is not until Chinese become Christians that they can be persuaded that new-born babies have souls. Souls and teeth, they think, come together.

The little girls who are allowed to live are given or sold when only eight or ten years old, to be brought up in the families of their future husbands, and are often very, very cruelly treated. Christianity is the only remedy for these evils. It is not alone the knowledge of God that the priests and nuns bring with them, it is the love of God also,— the charity that teaches the love of one's neighbor as one's self.

All this, the spiritual as well as the temporal advantages that would come to the poor little suffering children of Han-kin if Mollie could make up her mind to sacrifice her doll, was carefully explained, and the child at last said "Yes." There were tears later, bitter, bitter tears; for to Mollie, who had no brothers or sisters, and who was far from other companions, Ena Alfonsine had been much more than a mere doll. Yet the little girl made the sacrifice bravely, offering it up as a present to Jesus, who would come into her heart in another year, when she made her First Communion. Father Pierre had advised her to do this, for he knew that it was a

very real cross that he was laying on these young shoulders; but with such an issue at stake he could not choose to do otherwise.

That night the good missioner wrote two letters. One was in Chinese, and was directed to Wang-lo; the other, written in French, was a request to a friend in Paris to send him out the prettiest pink-clad doll that could be found.

The fame of Ena Alfonsine had preceded her up the river, and when Father Pierre arrived at Han-kin he was greeted by an expectant crowd. But Fan-choo's servants allowed no one to see the contents of the box, which they took from the missioner as they hurried him to the ruler's house. There he presented his precious offering, and in return he received a document which ensured him the right to travel through Han-kin, on the understanding that he talked no politics nor made his dwelling for more than one week in any town or village. This was as good a beginning as he could hope for, and he did not despair of some day obtaining permission for resident priests and nuns to take a glimpse of Heaven's light to these poor pagans.

As soon as Fan-choo gained possession of the coveted doll, she had a canopy of sweet-scented wood erected in an anteroom of the great hall in Wang-lo's house, and beneath this canopy Ena Alfonsine was installed. Joss-sticks were lit around her and richly decorated boxes were filled with incense and burnt before her. In fact, she became the most favored of the household gods, and all belonging to the ruler's court came to adore her and carry her in procession as became an idol.

Two or three times daily Fan-choo visited and worshipped her new treasure, and the ladies of the court almost rivaled her in her devotion to the doll. One amongst them even surpassed the ruler's wife in her admiration of Ena Alfonsine. Tza-ya was only twelve years old, and some day she was to be

the wife of Wang-lo's son, so she was being brought up in his home, quite away from her own family, and she was often very lonely. Day after day she visited the doll, and sometimes she lay awake at night longing to have it in her arms, to lay its flaxen head beside her own dark one on the pillow.

One evening there was a banquet in the house of Wang-lo, and when Tza-ya went down to say "Good night" to Ena Alfonsine she found the anteroom deserted. For the first time she was alone with the doll. She did not wait to consider what the consequence of her act might be, how she could return the idol to its place, how she would be punished — maybe starved as well as beaten — if she were found out. She only thought that the longed-for moment had come. For one happy night Ena could be hers alone.

Tza-ya could not reach the shrine, but by piling cushions on the floor she managed to get up to it. She seized the doll, kissed it rapturously, pressed it to her heart, and then in guilty terror turned and fled from the hall — away, away to the box-bed which was hers in the women's quarters. She could not sleep from joy and excitement; but when at length her eyes did close, she rested so soundly and so long that she was only wakened by the cries of the frightened servants, who had discovered the loss of the idol.

Terror-stricken, all her joy changed to fear, Tza-ya hid the doll amongst the padded coverings of her bed and crept downstairs to see what was happening. Fan-choo had been summoned, and her rage before the empty shrine was dreadful to see. Mingled with her anger was superstitious fear, and her threats of vengeance against the thief were absolutely inhuman. Tza-ya, listening hidden away behind a group of frightened servants, was rooted to the ground with fear. What could she do? However could she escape these awful punishments? If Ena's place of hiding were discovered these tortures would fall on her. She could not reason, but enough

presence of mind was left her to suggest that something must be done at once.

On a table in a great hall there was a beautiful lacquer box, that closed tightly with two metal clasps. Stealing out, unobserved as she had come, Tza-ya's eyes fell on this, and in a moment a plan had formed itself in her brain. The windows of Wang-lo's house looked out upon the river, and the lacquer box stood in one of these windows. In less time almost than it takes to tell it, the child had flown to her bedroom, seized the doll which threatened to bring such misfortunes upon her, pressed it for the last time to her little throbbing heart, and returned to the hall with Ena hidden in the wide sleeve of her tunic.

It did not take a moment to open the lacquer box and lay the doll on the silken lining. This Tza-ya did, and then with one noiseless movement she slipped the box out of the window. A splash in the river told that the doll-idol was gone from the house of Wang-lo for ever. Yes, for ever! No one discovered her, and to this day her disappearance is shrouded in mystery. Many think that the foreign idol went away of its own power. Fan-choo is divided between this conclusion and that of theft. Tza-ya alone could tell the truth, and she, perforce, is silent.

Father Pierre, as has already been said, was the chief man of Lan-ho; so when a treasure-trove, that was of little value to the fishermen who captured it floating down the stream, was found in the river, it was taken to him.

Months had passed since little Mollie Fanshawe had made the sacrifice of her doll for the sake of the pagan children of Han-kin. But although the child had moved to another station with her parents — and a new doll — the old priest had not forgotten the incident. Neither Mollie nor Ena Alfonsine was in his mind when the fisherman came to him, carrying a lacquer box; but on opening it they both came back to him like a



LADIES IN THE LAND OF THE BLUEGOWNS

flash — Mollie only in thought, whilst the doll had come back indeed. Quite unspoiled by water, only a little discolored by the fumes of incense, Ena lay in the silk-lined box, her past as deeply shrouded in mystery to Father Pierre as her present was to Fan-choo.

The old priest had not allowed his passport into Han-kin to lie idle. He had made so much use of it that, in order to cope with his work at home as well as in the new province that Mollie and Ena had opened to Christianity, he had sent for nuns to help him at Lan-ho. The Fanshawes' house had been turned into a temporary convent, and so it was back to her old home that Father Pierre carried Ena Alfonsine. He could not tell all her story, but what he knew he told, and the nuns promised to keep her safely until such time as a convent could be founded in Han-kin itself. For was not the place which was first opened to Christianity because of her, the fitting resting-place for Ena, the doll missioner?

THEIR OWN BABY

PLEASE give it to me, Baby!" Ita O'Shea put her hand out towards her brother.

"I'm not a baby, and I won't give it to you unless you call me by my name."

"Give it to me, Roddie, then. No, I know you're not a baby. I wish you were! It's horrid not to have a baby in the house."

"Do you think so?" said Aileen O'Connor, who was having tea with the O'Sheas. Being an only child, she had not the same experience of babies as the others had. "There's a baby next door at home, and it seems to be a noisy, dirty little thing."

"Of course it's noisy if it's dirty," replied Ita, who knew all about it. "No baby can be happy if it's not properly looked after. Our babies never cried, and they were the sweetest little things."

"Were they?" said Aileen, still doubtfully. "I'm not sure that I don't like dolls best, all the same."

"Dolls!" Ita was very scornful. "Why, anyone can have dolls. You can buy them anywhere, and then they're so stupid compared with babies."

"But you can buy babies, too," said Aileen, who would not give up the last word without a struggle.

"Buy them, Ailie? Are you really sure? I never heard of anybody wanting to sell a baby."

"Not in Ireland," said Ailie, "because we are Christians; but in China, where my aunt is a nun, the people think their babies have no souls until their teeth come, so they don't care about their baby girls at all, and they kill them unless the nuns or other Christians buy them."

"Oh, in China!" said Ita, quite disappointed. "I thought you meant somewhere where I could buy one."

"But you can buy them there," said Ailie. "If you send the money to Aunt Bride she would buy you one, I'm sure. She's always writing and asking Mother to send her money to buy babies, and then to feed them, so if she bought one for you she wouldn't want money to feed it, because you would do that."

"Would she really? I wonder if Mother would let me? Do you know how much they cost?"

"I heard Father say it was a fee and a half the last time he sent money to Aunt Bride. That would be thirty-two shillings and sixpence."

"What a lot!" said Ita, thinking of her money-box. "You can get a lovely doll for about a quarter of that."

"But if babies are so much nicer, as you say they are, they must be dearer, too," returned Ailie.

"That's quite true, of course," said Ita. "I wonder if we could ever get so much money. You see it would have to be a secret, Ailie, because if we asked Mother beforehand she might not say yes, and if we wait until the baby comes she couldn't say no. She just loves babies, too."

That was the beginning of it. It was Ita's idea, but Maura and Dympna, and even little Roddie, promised to keep the secret and to help, and no one even guessed why they suddenly became so good at their lessons, though their father did wonder why he had to pay the children for so many more good marks than usual. But saving money on good marks when you are only paid a penny for every five dozen is slow work, and Ita even lost a few marks that she might have had, because she kept thinking of some other way of filling the money-box, when she ought to have been learning her lessons. Dympna's birthday was coming, and that might bring a shilling or two, but beyond that there was nothing to look to until one day a

most lucky thing happened.

Close to the little town where the O'Sheas lived, there was a big wood which belonged to a friend of their father's. The children had permission to play there whenever they liked, and in the winter they used to pick up the fir cones and take them home for the schoolroom fire. Roddie's godmother, who lived in a big house across the square, met the children laden with cones one morning, and she offered her godson a penny for every basketful that they took to her house. After that they were kept busy for many days, until there was not a single cone left in the whole wood, and the store of money to buy a baby was increased accordingly. When the boys came home from school they had to be told the secret, and though they pretended not to care much about babies, they thought it would be rather fun to buy a little "Chinee" and they not only promised not to tell, but Coleman gave sixpence towards the fund, and Neal did something that was even more useful.

There was a big garden at the back of the house, where the children kept a family of Belgian rabbits. The game-keeper who looked after the fir-cone wood told Neal during the holidays that his master was going to buy some rabbits to turn down amongst his wild ones, and when the boy said his sisters had ten young ones to sell, he promised to give them a whole pound for them. After that there was so little wanting that Ita decided to write to Ailie's aunt about the baby, and this is what she wrote:—

"To Ailie O'Connor's Aunt Bride in China.

"DEAR SISTER: Ailie says that you buy babies. Will you please buy a very nice one for us? We think babies are sweet, but we want this one to be specially nice, please, because we haven't told mother about it yet, and when she sees what a nice one you send she won't be able to say no. We have a pound

and seven shillings, so as soon as we have three more and six-pence we will send it to you, but we are just longing for the baby.

“From your little friends,

ITA

DYMPNA

MAUREEN

RODDIE

“Coleman and Neal helped, too.”

When Aileen gave them her aunt's address to put on this letter she told them that it would take weeks and weeks to get an answer, and it seemed to the children that time had never gone so slowly before. Then things went wrong, too. Inattention at lessons brought bad marks, and the monthly earnings fell lower than they had been for a long time, and disappointment at this, added to the long waiting, made cross faces and impatient tempers. Mrs. O'Shea began to wonder if anything could be the matter, and at last she made up her mind that there must be something wrong. She was going up to the schoolroom to find out what it could be, when the post came in, bringing a rolled-up parcel addressed to the four children together.

“Who can be sending them something from China?” she wondered, looking at the postmark. Then, opening the door, she held her hands behind her, and called to the children.

“Who is expecting a parcel from China?” she said.

Forgetting everything in their excitement, all four sprang to their feet.

“The baby, the baby, the baby!” they shouted. “Where is it? O Mother, has it come? Do, do let us see it!” they all cried together.

“The baby!” repeated Mrs. O'Shea. “What baby?” and she showed them the parcel. “I never said anything about a baby. Look, this is what has come. Now tell me all about it.”

They told her a very confused story, for though they knew the baby had not come they were longing to see the answer to their letter.

It was safely fastened inside the roll, and with it was, not a baby in flesh and blood, but the photograph of a Chinese baby, and underneath was written:—“Ita Dymphna Mary Chu, baptized July 23, 1924.”

It was Mrs. O’Shea who read the letter aloud. Sister Mary Bridget thanked the children for promising to send the money for the baby, but she explained that she could not buy one unless they had their mother’s leave to spend their money in that way, and in any case the baby would have to stay in China, and they could only have the pleasure of knowing that they had saved one little life and had put salvation in the path of one little soul. If they still cared to buy a baby for God’s sake, she would gladly get one for them; and have it christened the names they chose. The baby in the photograph had been bought the day their letter had reached Ning-po, so the nuns had called it by the children’s names. If they decided to buy a baby, Sister Mary Bridget promised to write and tell them how it was growing, and, if possible, to send them pictures of it now and then.

When Mrs. O’Shea finished reading, she turned towards the little girls. Dymphna and Maureen were listening to her, but Ita had slipped down on to the floor, and was crying softly, yet very bitterly. It had been her idea. All these months she had been looking forward and longing to have this baby, and now, after all her trouble and waiting and planning, this was the end. It was a long time before her mother could console her. She explained to Ita that she could do nothing more pleasing to God than to give a soul, which otherwise would never have known its Maker, the privilege of being a Christian. She told her that a Chinese baby brought up in a little Irish town would never be happy; but if they still wished to spend their

money in this way, the baby Sister Bridget bought — their own baby it would be — would have every care and every chance of being both good and happy in this world and the next.

That evening when the children went to the drawing-room their mother had found a book of stories about China, and the children learned how cruel the pagan Chinese can be to their daughters, and how much suffering the Christian women escape. They heard many other things about the nuns and their work, and before bedtime came even Ita was consoled, and they were almost as anxious to buy a baby for Sister Bridget's orphanage, as they had been before to buy one for their own nursery.

It was their mother who sent the money to Ning-po, and with it went a letter, saying that they would like it to go to pay for the original of the photograph, who was already named after them. They added that they would try to earn enough to pay for Ita Chu in the orphanage, until she could learn to embroider, or weave, or wash, and so support herself. It is not quite so exciting for them to have their baby so far away, but they have decided that it is much less trouble, and the interesting letters that Sister Bridget finds time to send them, telling of little Ita, are always something to look forward to.

Now that their mother knows the secret, it is much easier to collect for it. They only put part of their mark money into the Chinese figure which stands on the schoolroom chimney-piece as Ita Chu's money-box, for they could not do without any pocket-money; but their friends, seeing the Chinese man, often ask about it, and add a penny or more to its contents. Then one year they got up a jumble sale for Sister Bridget, and at Christmas they acted a little play, and charged two-pence to everyone who came to see it.

When Ita Chu was a year old the children made her a

birthday present of the whole rabbit family. That is, they agreed that the rabbits should belong to her, so that all the money that was got for the little ones was to go into the Chinese man for her; and as each of the four took it in turns to look after them, they had the pleasure of their pets, besides having the joy of feeling that they were doing something for God's sake in taking care of them.

Ita Chu has brought a great interest into the children's lives, and they like to hear anything about China now. They know how important it is that their marks should be good, so that helps them to get on with their lessons; and as God never takes a gift from anyone without giving something in return, they get many graces and helps that they don't even know about, and yet that are aiding them, as they climb through life to Heaven.

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